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ABSTRACT

Spiritual Leadership: A Buddhist Approach

Mai Chi Vu

This study examines spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective in the context of a transitional economy: Vietnam. Vietnam is undergoing significant changes in blending traditional values with contemporary ones, which creates a complex and dynamic social setting for exploratory research. Changes include incorporating traditional spiritual practices and engaged Buddhism in the contemporary context. The study explores and examines how spiritual leaders in organizations interpret and enact Buddhist teachings and principles in Vietnam. The outcome of the preliminary quantitative study examining spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam informs a mixed methods study in which the qualitative phase is guided by a critical-realist-informed grounded theory approach. This mixed-methods study explores how spiritual leadership is distinctively interpreted by organizational leaders who are Buddhist practitioners. The findings suggest that Buddhist-enacted leadership is a process of self-transformation and operates as a skilful means involving multiple leadership identities to flexibly and mindfully respond to contextual challenges. Context emerges as having a primary role in the understanding and application of Buddhist principles in leadership, manifested by the Buddhist concepts of impermanence, non-attachment, and wisdom. Buddhist-enacted leaders' authenticity was challenged and moderated by the adoption of multiple identities, resulting in inconsistencies in leadership styles, the overall skepticism in Vietnamese society due to the lack of trust of the Vietnamese people as a result of the political and social features of the country's regime, and the level of maturity of leaders in respect of Buddhist practices. The study introduces a Buddhist-enacted leadership model that contextualises spiritual leadership and reaffirms that neither the promotion of commonly known good practices nor any mimetic isomorphism of social responsibility or Western sustainability practices would be able to address the complex nature of a developing nation like Vietnam.

Spiritual Leadership: A Buddhist Approach

Mai Chi Vu

Thesis presented for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



Durham University Business School

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university. I further declare that this thesis is solely based on my own research.

Mai Chi Vu

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Dedication

To my sweet daughter, Cherry.
Thank you for your constant companionship, for teaching me patience, tremendous
compassion and pure love! I love you to the moon and back!

Chapter One: Introduction to research background and objectives

This chapter introduces the research background and the context in which the research is situated. It then elaborates on the motivation for the research and identifies research gaps to generate research questions. The chapter also highlights the objectives and the intended contribution of the research.

1.1 Introduction

Organizations face more complex and paradoxical issues today than in the past; thus, there have been major changes in management and leadership practices. Organizations have been exposed to newly emergent phenomena in the workplace. According to Bennett and Lemoine (2014), such changes occur because of the VUCA phenomenon – volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity – in either the contemporary world or within organizations. As a result, organizations have tended to move their focus away from traditional concerns and express more appreciation of inner and intrinsic factors, including workplace spirituality (Bell & Taylor, 2004; Driver, 2005; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry, 2003; Fry & Kriger, 2009; Hicks, 2003; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Lips-Wiersma, 2003). There is increasingly a tendency to seek spiritual solutions to ease social and business challenges (Mitroff & Denton, 1999) and a growing consciousness and spiritual renaissance in individual and organizational change (Aburdene, 2005; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013).

Organizations, therefore, are inclined to look at more holistic approaches integrating both Western and Eastern philosophies in order to respond to organizational change and avoid circumstances where there is abstract generalization but blindness to context (Lowe, Kainzbauer, Tapachai, & Hwang, 2015). For many decades, Western scientific scholarship and its rational theories and research lens have been occupying scholarly conversation in organizational studies. However, Eastern philosophies have now gained the attention of scholars in various studies, including the revisiting of spiritual yearning in organizations (Marques, 2010).

There are a number of differences in Western and Eastern worldviews (Lowe et al., 2015, p. 306): Western assumptions are based on objective categorization, rule-based rationalism and deterministic thinking, whilst Eastern assumptions look at holism, complexity and contextual

thinking. Western philosophers like Aristotle, Plato and Parmenides analysed the external environment through objective scientific techniques, democratic debate and individual identity rather than Eastern ‘connectionism’ and ‘field dependence’ to understand the complexity of contexts. And while there is a separate internal and external categorization of the environment in the West, Eastern viewpoints consider it in relationship with human beings. Eastern approaches, according to Bedi (1999, p. 4), cultivate and ‘put premium on human relations and social values’ and appreciate the complexity of the context. Its underlying assumptions may give meaning to ‘fuzzy shades of grey or paradoxes’ that are less likely to be apparent in the modern and low-context reality-embedded representation of Western thinking (Lowe et al., p. 309). Thus it has become the motivation of this research to explore management and leadership practices from a holistic approach by appreciating and combining Eastern and Western approaches and examining their relationships, commonalities and distinctiveness in a specific context setting.

Within leadership studies, one stream assumes that leader behaviour is understood universally because leaders deal with common and similar problems across the world in organizing, motivating or influencing others to fulfill organizational goals (Arvey et al., 2015). On the other hand, another stream is based on a cultural-congruency view (Dorfman, 2014) that leader behaviour is affected by cultural forces. This study takes the latter approach.

Leadership constructs are claimed to be *emic*¹ and only found in specific cultures, such as the Chinese concept of *Guanxi* expressed in personal relationships, the Japanese *wa* (harmony), or paternalistic leadership in collectivist and high power-distance cultures (Arvey et al., 2015). Cultural characteristics shape leadership styles in many Asian countries (House et al., 2004; House et al., 2013), such as paternalistic leadership in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore and Taiwan (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006; Westwood & Chan, 1992). Furthermore, unique subordinate responses are embedded in Chinese family-like organizations (Cheng et al., 2004) and can be seen in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and leader–member exchange theory in Turkey (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). The research approach in this study supports the view that investigations of leadership in different cultures need to be enhanced, enriched and developed with in-depth and rigorous analysis of concept and process. Outcomes of leadership studies in different

¹ An inside perspective to understand culture from ‘the native’s point of view’ (Malinowski, 1922).

societies then would serve to understand how things are enacted in each of these societies. Further more they also ‘fine-tune’ existing theories, incorporating ‘cultural variations as moderators or parameters in those theories’ (Arvey et al., 2015, p. 2). Chemers (1993) suggests that looking at leadership from various cultural perspectives may uncover new relationships with a broader range of variables that are not often considered in contemporary theories in fields such as religion, language, history, and political systems.

To explore how cultural forces and context shape leadership practices, this study investigates the concept of spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam. Spiritual leadership, with altruistic love and inner calling (Fry, 2003, 2005), tends to fit well with Vietnamese organizations’ rising interest in intrinsic values and appreciation of a broader range of variables such as spirituality and religion (Chemer, 1994) and how may it impact employee well-being and social responsibilities. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a well-developed concept in the West that addresses societal and organizational needs and concerns in contemporary contexts. CSR refers to organizational policies and actions that involve various stakeholders and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental purposes that expands the notion of work, going beyond individuals’ job and organizations’ profit-focused pursuits (Aguinis, 2011). A recent study by Aguinis and Glavas (2017) found that CSR facilitates how individuals’ make sense of workplace meaningfulness. However, in developing nations, the interpretation and implementation of CSR varies. In these contexts, CSR has distinctive features (Jamali & Karam, 2016a) based on different religious influences (Perry & Ahmad, 2016), different levels of economic development (Jamali & Karam, 2016b), and diverse adoption strategies of CSR practices in developed countries (Idemudia, 2011).

Both spiritual leadership and CSR are well-established Western theories and concepts. Nonetheless, are they applicable in the Eastern context? If yes, how are they interpreted? Are there any alternative approaches towards these practices? According to Arvey et al. (2015), Asia is a fertile and critical arena for leadership studies with its rising economies; however, such rapid growth has not been accompanied by sufficient scholarly research. This study investigates the rising phenomenon of workplace spirituality, particularly the nascent theory of spiritual leadership and explores its impact on well-being and social responsibilities in the context of Vietnam. The study explores leadership from a Buddhist perspective, contributing to a nuanced and contextualised Eastern understanding.

1.2 Research background and context

Vietnam is one of the rare countries that stand out in the world for inheriting a variety of cultural values and norms resulting from long periods of colonization, external intervention, and internal conflict that still co-exist today in daily life and at workplaces (Le & Truong, 2005). There are two main reasons why the context of Vietnam is suitable for the study in order to explore distinctive cultural and social forces, spirituality, and the application of Buddhist practices in leadership and CSR practices.

Firstly, Vietnam is a nation that is rich and complex in culture (Le & Truong, 2005). Besides the diverse ethnic groups, Vietnam's complicated national history – along with French and American interventions – for decades has cultivated complex religious and spiritual influences. These influences are based on Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and locally religious and folk sects like Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. Vietnam has also inherited specific Chinese characteristics during a long history of the relationship between the two nations, like respect for seniority, hierarchy and collective responsibility. Vietnam also enjoys rich and pluralistic behaviours and practices through its relationship with France and America. Culturally imported concepts include 'divide and rule', 'law and order', 'individualism', 'elite systems', 'gallantry', 'camaraderie' (from France), 'grassroots democracy', 'materialism', 'merit systems' (from the United States), 'egalitarianism', 'collective decision and responsibility', and democratic centralism' (from socialism) (Le et al., 2007). All these diverse characteristics have shaped an independent identity of Vietnam known as '*bản sắc dân tộc Việt*' – the Vietnamese national identity – where cultural values are formed, changed and retained through generations (Le et al., 2007). Interestingly, according to McLeod and Nguyen (2001), though the Vietnamese hardly ever fully accepted practices or beliefs presented to them, they found it less difficult to adopt and adapt foreign traditions, blending them with indigenous beliefs. Therefore Vietnam presents a favourable context for examining the combination of Western and Eastern practices in both leadership and CSR.

Secondly, the open-door and renovation policy of Vietnam (*đổi mới*) in 1986 brought both opportunities and drawbacks to the country, in which leadership approaches are challenged and distinctively formed. Ralston et al. (1999) claim that the transition to a market economy in a Confucian milieu from the implementation of an 'open-door' policy, together with

concerns about socialist ideologies of the Vietnamese government, has resulted in a gradually merging set of values of individualism and collectivism among the Vietnamese. Quang (1997) believes that despite the country's socialist ideology, employees show an attitude toward individualism where, in the post-war period, they do not acknowledge common goals or shared objectives, instead emphasising individual achievements. However, according to Berrell et al. (1999), Vietnamese employees also hold a collective orientation in interpersonal relationships, paying attention to social networks and related reciprocity just as the Chinese do with *guanxi* (Child & Warner, 2003). Though *guanxi* can be effective in harnessing long-term mutual benefits, cultivating trust and personal relationships (Yeung & Tung, 1996), it can also be easily abused, resulting in corruption in the absence of a transparent legal system and social control norms in Vietnam (Vuong Ha, 2005).

The rich and complex social and cultural aspects of Vietnam and its heritage of substantial values along with its contemporary transitional economy reflect a context of grand challenges (Ferraro et al., 2015) and highlight research opportunities to explore unique leadership, CSR and management practices in their distinctive and special milieu. In Vietnam, there is a mixture of both Western and Eastern philosophies and practices that create an 'ambicultural' approach (Chen & Miller, 2010) whereby West meets East. As such, Vietnam is a favourable context to explore new considerations of leadership practices.

1.3 Research motivation

Considering the development of scholarship on contemporary leadership and management and the research context, the motivation and objectives of this study are four-fold:

1.3.1 To discover how West meets East

Scholarship on organizational studies and management is mostly associated with Western theories. Barkema et al. (2015) argue that it is now crucial to understand the contextual differences between the West and the East in terms of philosophies, institutions and cultural values and to highlight how these may offer new insights for theory building.

Knowledge about organizations and management practices in the East is limited or, if taken into consideration, they are 'colorized with a Western lens' (Barkema et al., 2015, p. 460). Eastern contexts have their own unique characteristics based on deep cultural norms and

traditions that may lay the foundation for distinctive practices in organizations. A number of scholars have encouraged research on Eastern phenomena, philosophy and cultural values to enrich and create a robust field of organizational management, thus having a better understanding of organizational behaviour across different situations (Barkema, 2001; Tsui, 2007). One of the motivational drivers for this research is to investigate the incorporation of Western and Eastern approaches in organizational studies by investigating, in an Eastern context, spiritual leadership theory that is based on a Western perspective.

Rising concerns over contemporary issues today highlight the need to have a comprehensive understanding of the shift away from materialistic and economic foci to spiritual orientations, starting from the right interpretation of the context. To fully unpack this requires not only an objective and scientific approach. One needs approaches that are both *emic* – an inside perspective of phonemic analysis of units of meaning to explore the uniqueness and particular culture in its own terms, and *etic* – an outside perspective of phonetic analysis of units to describe differences across cultures (Pike, 1967; Morris et al., 1999). Eastern philosophies, institutions and cultural norms facilitate such a viewpoint.

Eastern contexts are complicated, rooted in deep traditional norms that may create numerous obstacles to applying Western theories and concepts. Understanding Eastern philosophical influences is important to understand why some Western concepts and theories have failed to be applied in Eastern settings. A more expansive approach also allows one to arrive at more generalizable and less biased theories and concepts that address contemporary social concerns. For example, in Asia reciprocity, relational governance and relationships are critical social norms because governance by social relationship has its strong stance in social order and stability (Luo, 2000; Barkema et al., 2015). There is also evidence showing that people in the East are more collectivistic (Chen et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995), reflecting strongly in a distinction between in-group and out-group and between particularism and universalism (Schwartz, 1992). Most importantly, the way people communicate, and convey and interpret meaning is significantly different in the West and the East (Hall, 1989). People in the East are high-context communicators, relying heavily on context to avoid conflict and embarrassment, while those in the West are low-context communicators and pay very little attention to the context to convey messages (Gudykunst et

al., 1996; Holtgraves, 1997; Matsumoto, 1996). Such divergent styles can thus be associated with different management practices and business systems (Whitley, 1992).

The potential implications and insights of different values, norms, communication style, and paradoxical behaviour at individual, firm and societal levels in Asian circumstances can therefore contribute substantially to leadership literature (Hall, 1989; Barkema et al., 2015). An objective of this study is to investigate Eastern Buddhist-enacted approaches to leadership and the distinctive influence of the Vietnamese context and to contribute to the currently limited body of empirical studies of Asian leadership and our knowledge of leadership in general.

1.3.2 To revisit Buddhist principles as expressed in contemporary context

Buddhism has thrived in some foreign cultures because of its flexibility and adaptability (Loy, 2000). The incorporation of Buddhist principles into organizational studies has attracted significant attention from many scholars. This attention has been based mainly on popular secular Buddhist principles and teachings, such as the Four Noble Truths (Sanskrit: *catvāri āryasatyāni*; Pāli: *cattāri ariyasaccāni*), the Noble Eightfold Path (Pāli: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*; Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*), and karma (Sanskrit: *karman*; Pāli: *kamma*), to mention a few.

Buddhist economics scholars approach Buddhism from an economic perspective, applying Buddhist principles to consumption and sustainability (Schumacher, 1973; Kolm, 1985, Pryor, 1991; Payutto, 1994; Inoue, 1997; Welford, 2006; Puntasen, 2007; Zsolnai, 2011). Some scholars have also explored the application of Buddhist practices to leadership (Dalai Lama & van den Muyzenberg, 2009; Kriger & Seng, 2005); however empirical studies are still limited to a small number of studies (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Fernando, 2007; Fernando et al., 2008; Kemavuthanon & Duberley, 2009; Schuyler, 2012). Schuyler (2007) also investigated Buddhist practices in entrepreneurial organizations, mostly applying Buddhist qualities in Tibetan Buddhism. Midgley and Shen (2007), on the other hand, introduced the Buddhist systems-thinking approach developed from Buddhist basic principles. A rising interest in mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2003; Purser, 2014; Purser & Loy, 2013; Purser & Millilo, 2015) has also led to both popular and academic commentaries and a substantial number of both practitioner and scholarly publications. One of the most

significant applications is the concept and practice of mindfulness adopted at organizational levels (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Levinthal & Rerup, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006; Vu & Gill, 2017).

The development of Buddhism in the West, however, faces criticism for its commercialization and commodification. Many Buddhist concepts and principles have been debased in their definition and customised for corporate purposes. Mindfulness in Eastern Buddhism is based on wisdom articulated from experience in the past and the present (Gethin, 2011; Bodhi, 2011), whilst Western mindfulness praises 'in-the-moment' awareness (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Purser and Loy (2013) claim that it is just another technique for helping employees to cope better with stress at workplaces, thus establishing an organizational 'shield' for corporate greed.

Some scholars have questioned the contemporary meaning and authentic adaptation and relevance of Buddhist teachings to address pressing cultural issues today (Jackson & Makransky, 2000). They claim that if Buddhist traditions want to be accessible to a wider audience, Buddhist approaches need to have a critical perspective on how much of its authentic teachings are applicable to new socio-cultural settings. Buddhist scholars highlight that more than 2,500 years have passed since the birth of Buddhism and that its lessons and principles are still applicable to today's context. Motivated by this fact, this study is aimed at exploring this phenomenon in a Vietnamese setting, where the blend of both Eastern and Western values, norms and cultures provides a distinctive context for examining the effectiveness and practicability of applying Buddhist principles to contemporary leadership practices.

1.3.3 To explore Western concepts and theories through an Eastern lens

The main research themes in this study include spiritual leadership and CSR, which are both well-known Western concepts. Many of the studies represented in these two themes are anatomised or evaluated through a Western lens of interpretation. The aim of the study here is to identify any surprising and novel elements in the phenomenon by exploring Western concepts in a notably different environment with different Eastern cultural norms and values.

According to Johns (2006), contexts are not uniform: they are multifaceted, multidimensional and dynamic and can demonstrate cross-level effects, share the meaning of variables and show how situational features are salient. Context is linked to interpretation and meaning (Harvey & Myers, 1995). It is also an important factor that should not be ignored in investigating and classifying the relevance of a phenomenon in a study (Dilley, 2002). It is obvious that the world is not a linear variable space where time and place do not matter (Buckley & Lessard, 2006). In organizations, context is defined as a set of factors that together can produce more interpretable and interesting theoretical outcomes compared to such factors that are examined in isolation (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

Examining theories and concepts in different contexts may shed light on interesting patterns that cannot otherwise be captured in familiar contexts. Context can be interesting because it is paradoxical (Michailova, 2011, p. 131): ‘it is not “given” or “just there” as a static entity, nor it is entirely unpredictable’. The compelling nature of context or contextualization has been described as follows: ‘Change the context, and the entity itself is different. It realises another of its infinite potentialities. It becomes something different. Something more’ (Zohar, 1997, p. 46). Furthermore, context also challenges the transport of social science models across societies, questioning the logic and direction of the causal relationship established in one space or context compared with another (Michailova, 2011), potentially leading to further contributions to theory and even to methods. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the power of context in this study since Vietnam, with its distinctive history and cultural admixture, may yield contributions to often heated scholarly conversations and arguments about contemporary leadership and management studies.

1.3.4 To explore options in responding to organizational and leadership concerns

In organizational studies, a new metaphor of ‘the dark side of organizations’ has emerged in the mainstream literature to address new phenomena that has been historically overlooked or ignored (Linstead, Marechal, & Griffin, 2014). The dark side of the organization has been defined as ‘situations in which people hurt other people, injustices are perpetuated and magnified, and the pursuits of wealth, power or revenge lead people to behaviours that others can only see as unethical, illegal, despicable, or reprehensible’ (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004, p. xv). Scholars have identified dysfunctional and abnormal behaviours at different levels of the organization that are in need of correction in international business (Batra,

2007), management process and practices (Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2012a), decision making in management (Boddy, 2006), leadership (Clements & Washbrush, 1999; Conger, 1990; Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011; Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Khoo & Burch, 2008; McIntosh & Rima, 1998; Tourish, 2013), workplace spirituality (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009), and traits (Furnham, Hyde, & Trickey, 2012b). Such phenomena may result in dysfunctional outcomes due to the nature and interaction of motivation and context (Linstead et al., 2014). According to Griffin and O’Leary-Kelly (2004, p. 469), the main reason for this comes from the ‘shifting perception that is influenced by societal thinking’.

In leadership studies, acknowledging the limitations of leadership practices is important and necessary for corrective approaches to de-emphasise the overwhelming attention to leaders’ virtues compared to their shortcomings (Vince & Mazen, 2014). This can lead to dysfunctional behaviours and negative emotional outcomes for both leaders and other members of an organization. The malignant side of leadership is observable in various ways. For instance, when there is poor performance in the organization, a manager may be dismissed, taking the blame for a problem, whilst their leader remains in post (Boeker, 1992). In such cases, leaders are not taking full and due responsibility, according to the theory of scapegoating (Boeker, 1992; Hughes et al., 2010).

Another example of the dark side of leadership is the notion of the sacred aspects of leadership (Grint, 2010). The sacred aspect of leadership² may create fear or dissent among followers due to religious issues (Grint, 2010, p. 92). Similar to the sacred aspect of leadership, spirituality has been criticized for its instrumentalization to attain organizational end purposes in ways that it can do more harm than good to employees’ well-being. It will be interesting to see whether Buddhism – a major religion but more understood as a philosophy may be used as an instrument in leadership practices or not. This study draws upon a Buddhist perspective and is motivated to explore how Buddhist-enacted leaders perceive and may handle issues relating to the ‘contemporary dark side’ spirituality in organizations and in leadership in the complex transitional context of Vietnam.

² ‘An attitude of reverence or awe’, ‘a silence in the presence of the divine’ which in leadership refers to ‘the separation between leaders and followers, the sacrifice of leaders and followers, and the way leaders silence the anxiety and resistance of followers’ (Grint, p. 89, 91).

Buddha himself was an exceptionally skillful leader in leading the Sangha³ organization. He was a master of a variety of means of instruction, combining flexibility, freedom and authority in his teachings based on his freedom of means (Stoesz, 1978). The following clearly illustrates how the Buddha practised leadership:

He became the founder of a community growing from his teaching, which made a point of its inner cohesiveness, involving both monastics and laity, specialists in human excellence and admirers of that excellence, in interrelated roles [...] Of key importance are his expositions of the concepts of causality [...], often combined as aspects of the four truths. His sober analyses [...] without any trace of hidden agenda to dominate his interlocutors but grounded in his own distinctive achievement, inspired strong feelings of gratitude in them. It enabled the arising of the 'spotless eye of truth' by which their efforts could become fruitful in leading to their enlightenment.' (Stoesz, 1978, p. 140, 149)

The Buddha had freedom of means, which demonstrates his dynamic approach to teaching and leading. The context 2,500 years ago is clearly different from our modern milieu. However, this does not mean that the Buddha did not face challenges in introducing his teachings to a variety of audience with different backgrounds and religious beliefs. Yet Buddhism has been welcomed across cultures. Therefore, this study explores how lessons and enduring values from Buddhist teachings that have stood the test of time can attend to the less than benign side of leadership and organizational studies. and to introduce applicable Buddhist principles, if any, to contemporary organizational and leadership studies.

1.4 Research gap

In research, identifying a gap is crucial. A research gap is defined as the gap in the studies that constitute existing literature and what is lacking in the theme or domain of that literature (Bedeian, 2003; 2004; Tsang & Frey, 2007). A research gap helps the researcher to generate research questions by scanning for overlooked areas and inadequacies of a specific theory or by approaching a field from different perspectives (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

This study concerns the adaptation and contextualization of a Western spiritual leadership model in Vietnam, the exploration of Buddhist-enacted leadership, and the different natures

³ Buddhist monastery, consisting of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

of Eastern and Western philosophy and viewpoints on spirituality. This study involves the processes of gap-spotting (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) and problematisation (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011) in order to identify research spaces and formulate the research questions.

To identify research gaps, an extensive literature review was conducted covering studies on spirituality, spiritual leadership, Buddhist principles and their application in organizations and leadership, and the distinctive features of the research context – Vietnam. This study involves the revision of both theoretical and empirical studies in the relevant literature to explore underdeveloped areas (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). At the same time, a critical approach was taken in examining the established literature as an ‘endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently instead of what is already known’ (Foucault, 1985, p. 9) and to go ‘beyond minor critique or revisions of a puzzle-solving nature’ (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011, p. 32). It is engaging to challenge audiences’ assumptions on a subject (Davis, 1971, 1986) (taking into consideration the differences in Eastern and Western philosophical thinking). Therefore, the literature has been reviewed by way of taking a balanced approach between accepting novelty and maintaining continuity in exploring differences and uniqueness in what the context has to offer. At the same time, a connection has been maintained with established literature (McKinley et al., 1999).

There are few studies of the proposed research topic; there is also a significant difference in how Buddhism interprets its means and ends in comparison to desired organizational outcomes. There are also problematic issues concerning spirituality, mindfulness practices, leadership and CSR as instruments potentially for corporate greed, not to mention the complex and various definitions and understanding of the term ‘spirituality’ in spiritual leadership theory itself. Therefore, based on the context, the background, and the motivation for this research, the following gaps serve as the foundation for the research questions. They will be further examined in detail in the literature review chapter:

- (1) The lack of a comprehensive understanding and adaptation of Buddhist principles and teachings in the literature of organizational and leadership studies.

- (2) The difference between Western and Eastern worldviews in research and failure to acknowledge their complementary nature in complex contemporary organizational studies.
- (3) The lack of appropriate practices addressing critical aspects of spirituality, leadership, and CSR.
- (4) The lack of qualitative research in spiritual leadership exploring underlying issues in integrating traditional values in contemporary contexts.

1.5 Research objectives and questions

It is the aim of this research to provide empirical findings to clarify and contextualise the theory of spiritual leadership, thus rendering practical implications for leadership practices. The study draws upon reviews of the relevant literature, appropriate methodology, and analysis of findings to pursue the following objectives.

Firstly, one of the objectives of this study is to explore and examine Fry's spiritual leadership theory (2003, 2005) from a Buddhist perspective in the transitional economy of Vietnam. In contextualising spiritual leadership theory, this study examines the impact of the distinctive setting of Vietnam in shaping Buddhist-enacted leadership practices. The contextualization of the spiritual leadership model and examining it from a Buddhist viewpoint has the possibility of introducing new constructs, which in the opinion of Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007) can generate new directions to shape future thinking and contributions. However, this study takes a critical view on new constructs if there are any to make sure that they do not just represent 'old wines in new bottles' (Spell, 2001).

Secondly, the aim of this study is to utilise triangulation – 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (Denzin, 1978, p. 291). Although studies of spirituality and spiritual leadership have manifested in the literature in recent decades, they are still at a nascent stage. Moreover, most of the studies have been conducted using quantitative methods, regardless of the variations in the contexts in which they were conducted. While quantitative methods are rigorous in defining the outcomes of research as contributions to theory, scholars also encourage the exploration of principles and reasons that underlie such outcomes. In addition, with a mixed methods approach, both unique variances that may have

been neglected by single methods are uncovered, and a multi-perspective view is taken to enrich understanding and allow new dimensions or constructs to emerge (Jick, 1979).

Thirdly, it is important to combine rigor and relevance in research (Shrivastava, 1987; Thomas & Tymon, 1982; Vermeulen, 2005) to generate a practical contribution. According to Caplan, Morrison, and Stambaugh (1975), it is fundamental that researchers be able to have a two-way interaction between themselves as knowledge producers and practitioners. Thus the objective of this study is to generate practical implications for leadership through comprehensive in-depth interviews, interactions with leaders and organizational and participant observations to maximise the validity of the study and to provide usable recommendations for practitioners rather than merely general, abstract, trivial or obvious research outcomes (Davis, 1971; Gordon et al., 1978; Tichy, 1974; Thomas & Timon, 1982).

Formulating and arriving at a research question involves a variety of factors like timing, opportunities, active exposure to different views within the literature (Campbell et al., 1982; Frost & Stablein, 1992; Smith & Hitt, 2005), and understanding paradigms and the culture of the context under study (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). Taking into consideration all the above factors, the research questions of this study were generated from existing theories to further reveal theoretical and practical assumptions that could contribute to the scholarship of spiritual leadership and applied Buddhist studies.

This study consists of one main research question as follow:

How do spiritual leaders interpret and enact Buddhist teachings and principles in organizations in the context of Vietnam?

The research question is built upon the ‘how’ element to explore and investigate the underlying assumptions and reasons for the interpretation of Buddhist practices in Vietnamese organizational contexts. With the ‘how’ element, the intent of the study is not only to utilise the theory as it is with its quantitative nature but also to use a qualitative approach to explore the theory in a specific context, given the importance of contextualisation in this study. The ‘how’ characteristic in the research question may also explore other alternative constructs in the practice of spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective. This is in comparison to Fry’s original spiritual leadership theory (2003, 2005). It may stimulate

surprising results or even generate inconsistencies and incorporate antecedents or consequences different from conventional wisdom (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Whetten, 1989). The research question brings out and clarifies the ‘context’ and ‘contextualization’ features of theory adaptation in a different setting and culture with distinctive norms and values. More importantly, the ‘how’ element may add value in providing a more holistic picture of how West meets East and how traditional values can be translated into contemporary practices.

1.7 Research significance

This study is significant in a way that it does not take the usual mono-quantitative approach to spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003) but explores the contextual meaning of spirituality and unique spiritual leadership characteristics from a Buddhist perspective in a transitional context with a distinctive nature. This study is based on a quantitative preliminary research to inform the qualitative grounded theory approach to explore spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective in a transitional context. The study responds to Benefiel et al.’s (2014) call for more exploratory approaches to address the controversial ‘spiritual’ aspect in spiritual leadership theory and to Eisenhardt et al.’s (2016) support over inductive methods to address grand challenges (Ferraro et al., 2015) that the Vietnamese context reflects through its complex transitional process. To address this phenomenon in the challenging case of Vietnam, the study employs a critical realist philosophy, given the contemporary and transitional nature of the research context and the combination of Western and Eastern philosophies. This approach seeks to critically examine the research topic, to acknowledge the possible human limitations in pursuing knowledge and truth, and to take a balanced stance in either affirming or rejecting theories based on empirical evidence (Miller & Tsang, 2010; Sayer, 2000).

Organizations are complex, diverse, and changing social phenomena with multiple contingent, causal relationships (Astley & Van de Ven, 1983; Fabian, 2000) and ambiguous boundary conditions (Miller & Tsang, 2010). Therefore, there are numerous obstacles in conducting research and testing a theory (Miller & Tsang, 2010). There are constraints in human behaviour and actions like rules, routines and habits (Archer, 2000; Downward et al., 2002) and changes in organizational behaviour, beliefs and practices imposed or introduced

as a result of knowledge created by researchers (Knights, 1992) that disrupt the continuity of the phenomena being investigated (Numagami, 1998).

Therefore, there is a certain amount of doubt about the existence of social facts and assumptions of stability. As Gioia and Pitre (1990) say:

What is 'out there' becomes very much related to interpretations made 'in here' (internal to both the organization members under study and the researchers conducting the study). Likewise, when a person adopts a value for challenging the status quo, the implicit assumption of stability also becomes inappropriate. What is stable becomes a target for change. (p. 587)

It is evident that the changing nature of organizations and their practices invites critical viewpoints that can acknowledge both the advantages and the disadvantages of contemporary phenomena. Critical realism is a growing intellectual movement in the social sciences (Cruickshank, 2003) because it interrelates both ontological and epistemological perspectives (Miller & Tsang, 2010). It critically, logically, and realistically evaluates theories based on both 'the existence of a world independent of researchers; knowledge of it [...] and a fallibility epistemology in which researchers' knowledge of the world is socially produced' (Miller & Tsang, 2010, p. 144). This approach is appropriate to revealing underlying assumptions and making sense of 'fuzzy shades' or grey areas in Vietnam's transitional context and to assisting the author, as a native Vietnamese, to remain objective in both making and reporting observations and in generating relevant and context-sensitive arguments.

Critical realism therefore complements this study well. This framework is important for understanding how Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership practices are formed, whether such approaches are effective or not, and how context shapes theory application. The intention of this study is to critically and in a practice-friendly way convey the knowledge, practice, and interpretation of Buddhist-enacted leadership to interested audiences. The mixed methods approach aligns with critical realism in coping with the complicated nature of the social phenomena under study that otherwise may remain undetected by any single research approach (Mingers, 2006). According to Gioia and Pire (1990), a multi-paradigm perspective allows room not only for the search for truth but also for the search for comprehensiveness.

In this case, the study seeks to articulate an in-depth understanding and critical view of the setting under study and of concerns over controversial issues of spiritual leadership and Buddhist interpretations and applications in organizational studies.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The next chapter of the thesis, Chapter Two introduces the concept of spirituality, spiritual leadership theories and the preliminary quantitative research which tests Fry's spiritual leadership theory in the context of Vietnam. This informs and justifies the main research approach to be followed in this study in exploring spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective.

Chapter Three further examines and positions spiritual leadership theory among other related leadership theories. This considers similarities and differences to justify the qualitative approach that explores spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective in the context of Vietnam.

Chapter Four introduces some Buddhist principles and their applications in organizational studies through a critical lens. The chapter highlights the limitations of introducing Buddhist concepts in leadership and organizational studies and the drawbacks of Western misinterpretations that have restricted the applicability of Buddhist concepts and principles. It explains how a qualitative approach would be helpful to examine the practicability of Buddhist concepts in leadership and organizational studies.

Chapter Five introduces the research philosophy, research methods and data collection procedures that are used in the study. The chapter explains how the preliminary quantitative approach in chapter two informs the qualitative grounded theory approach as the main research approach of the study in responding to the research question.

Chapter Six reports the research findings from the qualitative grounded theory approach and outcomes in relation to the relevant literature and research context.

Chapter Seven discusses and integrates the literature, the methodology and the research findings to critically discuss research outputs and any 'surprise' elements of the research. The

chapter also introduces a Buddhist-enacted leadership model and discusses spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective through a critical lens.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by reviewing the response to the research question, highlighting major contributions of the study, providing practical recommendations for organizations, and acknowledging the limitations of the research, as well as proposing avenues for future research.

Chapter Two: Spirituality, spiritual leadership and a preliminary study of spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam

This chapter is an overview of the concepts, models, terminologies and research in the literature on spirituality, workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership. The chapter also examines these concepts in the context of Vietnam. Additionally, this chapter presents a preliminary quantitative study of Fry's spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam and critically examines the outcome of the study to inform and justify the methodological approach in the following chapters.

2.1 Spirituality and workplace spirituality

This section critically reviews scholarship in spirituality and workplace spirituality more specifically, including these concepts in the specific setting of Vietnam.

2.1.1 Spirituality

There has been a significant shift in organizational and management theories and practices in recent years. Shareholder theory, for example, is widely considered a failed philosophy (Fry, 2005). There have been changes from predictable outlooks to unpredictable ones (Gleick, 1997); from control to trust and empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988); from simplicity to complexity (Lewin, 1999); from transactional to transformational leadership (House & Shamir, 1993); from closed to complex systems (Dooley, 1997); from an economic focus to a focus on quality of life, spirituality and corporate social responsibility (DeFoore & Renesch, 1995; Walsh et al., 2003); from self-centeredness to interconnectedness (Capra, 1993); and from a materialistic ethos to a spiritual orientation (DeFoore & Renesch, 1995; Fox, 1994; Neal, 1997). Such changes have created a spiritual movement in organizations (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Benefiel et al., 2014; Lambert, 2009; Miller, 2007) and increasing attention from scholars in the field of spirituality and workplace spirituality (Benefiel, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2014; Bell & Taylor, 2004; Carroll, 2013; Dean, Fornaciari, & McGee, 2003; Dent et al., 2005; Driver, 2005; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry, 2003; Fry & Kriger, 2009; Hicks, 2003; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002; Miller and Ngunjiri, 2015; Milliman et al., 2017).

There are reasons for this movement. Palmer (1994) explains that there are various dysfunctional behaviors at different levels of our lives, such as workaholism, burnout, broken families and lack of family connectedness. On the other hand, Neal (1997) says, for example, that less secure jobs due to downsizing and the Baby Boomers' mid-life search for personal adjustment, career transitions and spirituality (Athey, 2003) all contribute to the need for greater spirituality in the workplace. All of the following have added to the growing interest in spirituality at work: employee feelings of demoralization due to downsizing and restructuring in the recent decades (Brandt, 1996; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008); inequality in wages (Beyer, 1994); the workplace as a source of community for people as a result of diminishing neighbourhoods, extended families, and connected groups (Conger, 1994); employee cynicism and mistrust (Fagley & Adler, 2012); Baby Boomers' growing interest in contemplating life's meaning (Brandt, 1996; Conger 1994); and increased global competition and counterproductive working behaviour (Iqbal & Hassan, 2016) acknowledging the importance of the meaningfulness of work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). It is important to note that previously and traditionally, spirituality has not been welcomed to be freely expressed at work (Laabs, 1995). However, its meaning and purpose in living might well shape an organization's needs via corporate spirituality (Miller et al., 2017; Milliman et al., 2017; Wheatley, 2009; Zohar, 1997).

There are various definitions of spirituality. Though spirituality and religion may overlap in some ways, spirituality remains distinct from religion. For example, 'spirituality involves the values, ideals, and virtues to which one is committed' (Vitell et al., 2015, p. 149). Allport (1950) defines religious motivation as consisting of both intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness, in which spirituality is more closely related to an intrinsic view of religiosity, representing a commitment to values and ideals. In other words, an 'extrinsically motivated person is viewed as using his religion to fulfil other basic needs such as social relationships or personal comfort, whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion' (Allport & Ross 1967, p. 434). Thus, when religion by itself is considered to be the only path to salvation and excludes those who do not share the same viewpoint (Cavanagh, 1999) it can result in an arrogant attitude, for example, considering one company, faith or society superior or worthier than another (Nash, 1994).

The Dalai Lama has differentiated spirituality and religion very lucidly:

Religion I take to be concerned with faith in the claims of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is the acceptance of some form of heaven or nirvana. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual prayer, and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony – which bring happiness to both self and others. (Dalai Lama XIV, 1999, p. 22)

The Dalai Lama (1999) highlights that rituals and prayer are directly related to religion, whereas the quest for joy, peace and serenity are not necessarily so. Religion needs spirituality, but religion is not necessary for spirituality (Fry, 2005). ‘This is why I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without. What we cannot do without are these basic spiritual qualities’ (Dalai Lama, 1999, p. 22). Therefore, individuals can develop their inner qualities and values without being dependent on any religious or metaphysical belief systems, and workplace spirituality can be either inclusive or exclusive of religion’s practices or theories (Fry, 2005).

In organizational studies, spirituality is defined variously as ‘the attendant feeling of interconnectedness with all things in the universe’ (Kriger & Seng, 2005, p. 722); ‘deeper connections to one another and to the world beyond ourselves’ (Conger, 1994, p. 15); inner consciousness (Guillory, 2000); the process of self-enlightenment (Barnett et al., 2000); work feeling stimulating actions (Dehler & Welsh, 1994); inner search for personal development and through transcendent mystery (Delbecq, 1999); a feeling of connectedness of self to others and the universe (Mitroff & Denton, 1999); the sense of purpose, meaning, connectedness and value or worth in what people seek and do (Gill, 2014) – among many other ways. Case and Gosling (2010) emphasises the complexity of spirituality in the context of the five main world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism – while Wexler (1996) further reflects on its complexity in terms of Eastern and Western mysticism, paganism, magic and astrology. These widely varying definitions of spirituality indicate there are problems in specifying, codifying or measuring spirituality’s presence and influence within organizations (Hicks, 2003).

In the organizational context, Goertzen and Barbuto (2001) have found that spirituality itself can be addressed in various ways: through self-actualization, purpose and meaning in life and health and wellness. Spirituality in the job design literature focuses on the way that it gives a sense of purpose and meaning in the work itself (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2004, p. 13) consider spirituality as a framework for organizational values that promote employees' experience of transcendence and sense of being.

2.1.2 Workplace spirituality

Like spirituality, workplace spirituality has been receiving tremendous attention in scholarly conversations of late (Benefiel, 2003, 2005, 2008; Bell & Taylor, 2004; Carroll, 2013; Conger, 1994; Dean, Fornaciari, & McGee, 2003; Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005; Driver, 2005; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fairholm, 1998; Fry, 2003; Fry & Kriger, 2009; Garg, 2017; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Gill, 2014; Gupta et al., 2014; Hicks, 2003; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; Pandey et al., 2016). Workplace spirituality is defined as an organizational phenomenon whereby employees' spiritual and religious viewpoints are expressed (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Most studies place emphasis on the bright side of workplace spirituality (Biberman & Whitty, 2000; Conlin, 1999; Gunther, 2001; Milliman et al., 1999). Workplace spirituality is promoted as fostering 'the whole person' in the workplace (Hicks, 2002; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Sheep, 2006); increasing employee engagement, creativity, and meaningful approaches to work authenticity (Benefiel, 2005; Cavanagh, 2003); enhancing organizational effectiveness and performance (Benefiel, 2005; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Milliman et al., 1999; Osman-Gani, Hashim, & Ismail 2013; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012).

Studies highlight that there are positive relationships between workplace spirituality and employee commitment and job satisfaction (Altaf & Awan, 2011; Bodia & Ali, 2012; Chawla & Guda, 2010; Hong, 2012; Kazemipour et al., 2012; Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2016; Gupta et al., 2014; Kazemipour et al., 2003; Pawar, 2009), and in managing organizational stress (Chand & Koul, 2012). Workplace spirituality also positively promotes innovative behaviour (Afsar & Rehman, 2015) and knowledge sharing behaviour (Rahman et al., 2015) while it negatively correlates with stress (Daniel, 2015), deviant behaviour (Chawla, 2014), and intention to quit (Gatling et al., 2016; Milliman et al., 2003). A recent study by González-González (2018) indicates that embracing spirituality in the workplace has benefits of a

health-related nature. And Milliman and colleagues (2017) suggest that workplace spirituality can add value to the person–environment fit theory and suggest further research avenues. Thus workplace spirituality in many studies is acknowledged as a ‘win-win-win’ phenomenon for employees, the environment, and the organization (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009).

Workplace spirituality is regarded by some as associated with meaningful work at the individual level, a sense of community at the group level, and alignment with organizational values at the organizational level (Daniel, 2010; Neal & Bennett, 2000; Hawley, 1993; Milliman et al., 1999; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). At the individual level, spirituality at work involves one’s daily interactions and inner motivation such as becoming involved in activities that promote a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in one’s life (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Hawley, 1993), while contributing to others and the organization (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fox, 1994; Neal, 1998). At the group level, spirituality at work is more about relationships with others. Such relationships include interactions among employees and co-workers to achieve psychological, emotional and spiritual connections (Neal & Bennett, 2000), to promote a connection between the inner-self of individuals and the inner-self of others (Maynard, 1992; Miller, 1992) and to provide support, care, and freedom of expression (Milliman et al., 1999). At the organizational level, the spiritual movement can shape productive, flexible and creative workplaces (Eisler & Montouri, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

2.1.3 Critical perspectives on workplace spirituality

Though workplace spirituality can lead to positive organizational outcomes, Lips-Wiersma and colleagues (2009) claim that workplace spirituality does not necessarily create an ‘everyone wins’ scenario and it does have its dark side. Members of the organization may ‘hijack’ workplace spirituality (Gill, 2014). It can be a management fad (Watkins, 2003), a ‘religious’ language for commercial gain (Bass, 2008), or a source of coercion and favouritism (Cavanagh, 1999). Spirituality can be misused for managerial control (Bell & Taylor, 2004; Boje, 2008; Driver, 2008) and at the same time can be used as an instrument for pursuing corporate goals (Benefiel, 2003; Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008; Steingard, 2005). Scholars criticise the commodification of spirituality for primarily profit-making ends rather than its being valued for its own true meaning and value in the workplace (Case &

Gosling, 2010; Casey, 2002; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Therefore, spirituality can lead to distrust, division and preferential treatment (Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002), and it is referred to as an attempt to manipulate employees, placing the needs of the organization above their own needs (Krishnakumar et al., 2015). Even once employees rationally ‘choose’ their own spirituality, they may become vulnerable to manipulation (English et al., 2005).

Managers and leaders may manipulate employees through spirituality in various ways. Kamoche (2000) identifies the potential hegemonic impact on workplace spirituality caused by ill-intentioned managers. They may relate spirituality to organizational culture or outcomes (Perrow, 2002, 2007), encouraging individual spirituality and the use of one’s inner resources to cope with organizational demands effectively, which may be repressive rather than enlightening – a surreptitious form of control over the individual (Bell & Taylor, 2004, p. 462). According to Lips-Wiersma et al. (2009), the combination of individual ego and organizational identity can create a window for organizations to deploy ‘egoistic fantasies toward its own ends’ (p. 290). Workplace spirituality may be used deliberately for organizations pressuring employees to accept stressful conditions, insisting they rely on their own spiritual strengths (Case & Gosling, 2010; Driver, 2007). Thus, spirituality becomes a control mechanism for getting employees to work harder in the name of pursuing meaningfulness in work and life (Caproni, 2004; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Stansbury and Barry (2007) recognise that control is an indispensable mechanism in organizations for the production of goods and services. Nevertheless, organizations are becoming trickier and more sophisticated in employing so-called ‘cow psychology’ (Purser & Loy, 2013) to make cows produce more milk. Casey (1996, 1999) calls this ‘designer spirituality’ in a ‘designer culture’ (Biberman & Whitty, 1997) where the employees with spiritual drivers are more likely to work together to accomplish mutual organizational objectives.

Organizations by nature are goal-driven entities, adopting various means to focus on the desired or required ends. For example, practices like empowerment or creativity may be just other ways of increasing the bottom line (Lips-Wiersman et al., 2009). Spirituality alone cannot sustain organizations in the commercial world without profit, but organizations can genuinely adopt spirituality by balancing person–organization fit with organizational control (Ashforth & Pratt, 2003). As such, workplace spirituality has its potential misuses and

drawbacks. The question now is whether and how leaders can address this phenomenon in organizations correctly, effectively and wisely.

2.1.4 Spirituality in the context of Vietnam

Workplace spirituality is a contextualised phenomenon; therefore, to identify, seek or build meaning, connectedness or a sense of transcendence in the workplace through spirituality, it is crucial to understand its context (Prabhu et al., 2017). There has been no particular research examining workplace spirituality in the Vietnamese setting; however, to support this study in examining how spirituality is brought into the workplace, it is important to understand the interpretation of spirituality by the Vietnamese people. In Vietnamese, spirituality means ‘*tâm linh*’, however; its meaning and symbolic representation are beyond the secular interpretation of the word *spirituality* in English.

In Vietnam, traditional spiritual and folk practices and rituals known as ‘national identity’ (*bản sắc dân tộc*) include the ‘Spirit Side’ (*bên thánh*), such as ancestor worshipping (*thờ cúng tổ tiên*), hero worshipping of the deified hero Trần Hưng Đạo, appreciation of mother goddesses (*thánh mẫu*), the Jade Emperor (*Ngọc Hoàng*), holy sages of saints (*thánh*), and figures of the Chinese Daoist pantheon – the Kitchen God (*Ông Táo*) and the ‘Buddha Side’, including prayers for the Buddhas (*Phật*), Bodhisattvas (*Bồ tát*), Buddhist saints or arhats (*La hán*), and the Dharma guardians (*Hộ Pháp*) (Soucy, 2012, p. 26). The major departure of the Spirit Side from the Buddha Side is the interactions of gods and goddesses with humans – the Buddha Side promotes spiritual progress and the ability to deal with the material world and consequences of death and rebirth (Soucy, 2012, p. 28). Though religious rituals and practices exist more on the Spirit Side – such as ancestor worshipping (*thờ cúng tổ tiên*), spirit possession rituals (*hầu đồng*), feng-shui (*phong thủy*), ghost calling (*gọi hồn*), fortune telling (*xem bói*), writing petitions to the gods (*sớ*), and talismans (*bùa*) – there are still a number of Buddhist and non-Buddhist rituals like making offerings to supernatural beings and the hungry ghost. Some of these rituals are practised to approach spirits and ancestors in seeking material wealth or dealing with daily life issues such as help in business, examinations, curing illness and those relating to marriage (Soucy, 2012). As such, interpreting spiritual practices in Vietnam from these viewpoints resembles *spiritualism*: ‘a cultural movement devoted to communication between living persons and those who had passed to the Other Side’ (Corbett, 2009, p. 339).

However, there is another view of the Vietnamese spiritual world, '*thế giới tâm linh*', called the elite view, imposed by the state and the Buddhist institution represented by the state-controlled Vietnamese Buddhist Association, which promotes 'honoring, commemorating rather than supplicating for divine favor' (Soucy, 2012, p. 32). In this view, some practices are officially not allowed and are considered as superstitious practices by the Ministry of Culture and Information, including spirit possession rituals, ghost calling, and magical healing and exorcisms, to mention a few (Fjelstad & Nguyen, 2006). The elite view is more in support of traditional symbols and folk beliefs that embrace responsibility to valuable historical, cultural, moral and social values, like honoring ancestors and those who rendered great services to the country.

In practice, both the elite and popular view of spiritual and religious practices exist; thus, the Vietnamese involve themselves in a wide range of religious and spiritual activities. Though numerous improvements have been made to improve the living standards of most people, since the renovation period of Vietnam in 1986, there is also a feeling of unrest, powerlessness, and uncertainty as a result of the rapid changes in the society (Soucy, 2012; Taylor, 2004). In the organizational context, there appears to be a tendency for business owners, especially enterprises that operate based on lies and cheating, to seek supernatural assistance through geomancy, fortune telling, and the burning of spirit money for ancestors and the spirits in exchange for material wealth and benefits (Soucy, 2012, p. 8, 29). Therefore, examining this phenomenon from a Buddhist perspective in the more contemporary context of Vietnam in a way that highlights the ability to deal with the material world and the consequences of death and rebirth in this study is challenging. However, it is and worthwhile pursuing to identify the distinctive features of workplace spirituality in Vietnam.

2.2 Spiritual leadership

This section of the chapter explores scholarship concerning how spirituality can be incorporated in leadership and critically reviews studies of spiritual leadership.

2.2.1 Spirituality in leadership

Traditional leadership theories place significant emphasis on the personal qualities of the leader. Bass (1985, 1998) describes how transformational leadership is based on leaders' individualised consideration of their employees and followers, their intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealised influence (associated with charisma). Charismatic leadership theories focus on the effect of charisma on followers' perceptions of leaders' outstanding identity and values (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) and followers' higher-order needs (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Conger, 1999). However, there are concerns over how charismatic leadership can be used to develop 'corporate cultism' (Tourish & Pinnington, 2002) since it is highly dependent on followers and the situation (Reave, 2005). Leadership today is more context-specific: 'it is a matter of style and preference: a question of choice in how to lead and how to be led' (Hargreaves, 2011, p. 231) in a particular setting. Questions remain in the leadership scholarship on how can we know whether leaders may deliberately manipulate followers to fulfil their own personal goals (Bass & Steidlmeir, 1999; Howell, 1988). The introduction of spirituality into leadership provides an integrated way to examine such leadership practices and associated values (Reave, 2005).

While traditional empirical research focused on leadership power, behavior, traits and skills, an increasing number of studies examine leadership as the manifestation of a leader's 'spiritual core' (Fairholm, 1998). As long ago as the 1950s Ohmann (1955) claimed that many people had lost faith in the basic values of society; thus, a spiritual rebirth was needed for industrial leadership. He also raised several fundamental questions about the nature of business and human values: 'Production for what? Do we use people for production or production for people? How can production be justified if it destroys both personality and human values both in the process of its manufacture and by its end use?' (Ohmann, 1955, p. 37). According to Reave (2005), leadership purely based on strategy can be hollow, thus integrating character, beliefs and behaviour is crucial for a leader to maintain leadership authenticity: 'Incorporating spiritual values into leadership can bring consistency between the leader's image and identity, allowing the individual to function with a higher level of inner personal integration' (p. 668).

Spirituality as a source of motivation

Spirituality can be a source of motivation for a number of reasons. Employees who are allowed to express their spirituality at work find their work more meaningful and satisfying (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Occupations that are perceived as a calling rather than a job or career are associated with less absenteeism (Paloutzian et al., 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). And leaders with spiritual values may trigger the latent motivation of others resulting in an increase in job satisfaction and production at work (Reave, 2005). Furthermore, leaders who consider their work as a means for spiritual growth enhance organizational performance (Himmelfarb, 1994).

Studies of spirituality have also shown that spirituality affects life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, hope, optimism and meaningfulness in life (Emmons, 1999, p. 876). Spirituality influences organizational outcomes such as absenteeism, productivity, turnover, stress and health (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), organizational learning (Bierly et al., 2000), community building (Cavanaugh et al., 2001) and organizational performance (Krahnke et al., 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry et al., 2005). For instance, spirituality positively correlates with performance, morale and commitment, whilst negatively correlating with absenteeism, turnover and burnout (Paloutzian et al., 2003, p. 130; Wright & Staw, 1999). It is a source of healing and harmonising compassion, wisdom, connectedness in egocentric, sociocentric and anthropocentric forms to express universal compassion (Maxwell, 2003). Wilbert (1995) asserts, 'the profound fruition of the decentering thrust of evolution – a compassion which breathes the common air and beat the common blood of a Heart and Body that is one in all beings' (p. 291). Overall, spirituality can enhance leadership effectiveness and motivation with positive impact on the bottom line of an organizations' balance sheets (Reave, 2005).

Spirituality and leadership effectiveness

Leadership theories mostly describe how leaders influence followers; yet few studies have described the source of motivation and commitment in leaders themselves. According to Reave (2005), spirituality and faith can be drivers for personal growth and transformational leadership. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) continue that in leaders' moral development spirituality is also associated with ethical behaviour. Though ethical values can be enacted without spiritual faith, spirituality cannot exist without ethical values (Reave, 2005).

Furthermore, spirituality mostly has a major influence on cultural beliefs, forming leadership perceptions and characteristics in different cultures (Bulley et al., 2017). Therefore, leadership with spiritual values – spiritual leadership – differs from contingency theories of leadership in the way that it can provide leadership practices and guidelines applicable cross-culturally, not limited to a particular situation or culture (Reave, 2005).

Fairholm (2011) named spiritual leadership as the 5th generation in the historical development of leadership theory, following theories of transactional and transformational leadership, principle-centred leadership, servant leadership and moral leadership (4th generation – what leaders value and do); contingency theory and situational leadership theories (3rd generation – where leadership happens); behavioural leadership theories (2nd generation – what leaders do); and charismatic and trait leadership theories (1st generation – who the leader is). From the 1990s, spiritual leadership was developed using concepts such as strategic, visionary, authentic, spiritual, responsible and adaptive. Spirituality fosters leadership effectiveness in contemporary contexts in a way whereby it is not enough for future leaders just to be equipped with new knowledge and skills but to be able to demonstrate higher levels of maturity and emotional and spiritual wisdom to cope with new challenges and uncertainties (Astin & Astin, 2000).

2.2.2 Spiritual leadership theory

The development of a framework for spiritual leadership is recognised as the result of the work of Fairholm (1997, 1998, 2001), Sanders et al. (2002) and Fry (2003, 2005), with acknowledgment to Benefiel (2005) for work on current trends. According to Fairholm (1998), spiritual leadership is not simply a type of leadership because the mind of the leader has shifted and this has affected both leaders and followers. This shift may include using spiritual resources to lead followers (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2002), thus creating a shift in leaders' roles in becoming a spiritual guide (Konz & Ryan, 1999). Fairholm (1996, 1998) was one of the first scholars to put the terms spiritual and leadership together to explain spirituality in the context of the workplace. Since then further development moved the field toward a theory of spiritual leadership (Fairholm, 2002; Fry, 2003). Other researchers have demonstrated the relevance of spiritual leadership to emotional intelligence, ethics, values, charisma, stewardship, transformation and servant leadership (Biberman, Whitty, & Robbins, 1999; Cacioppe, 2000a; Tischler, Biberman, & McKeage, 2002)

To date, Fry's (2003) Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT) has been the most prominent theory of spiritual leadership that has been tested in research and applied in organizational settings. Scholarship in spiritual leadership has been increasing in the last two decades because the concept responds to contemporary issues and needs. If in the past bureaucratic organizations motivated their employees through fear and extrinsic rewards (Draft & Lengel, 1998), in today's corporate world managerial practices need to be very different for spiritual survival and sustainable positive organizational outcomes and well-being (Fry, 2003).

Fry's (2003) theory of spiritual leadership was developed based on the concept of intrinsic motivation. The theory draws on values-based leadership constructs such as transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993), charismatic leadership (House & Shamir, 1993), principle-centred leadership (Covey, 1991), and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Spiritual leadership reflects the interaction of intrinsic motivators of leaders and followers, operationalised by hope, faith, vision and altruistic love, which results in the spiritual meaning of membership and calling and enhances organizational outcomes (Benefiel et al., 2014; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013; Hill et al., 2013; Karakas, 2010). Fry (2003, p. 695) defines spiritual leadership as 'the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership'. Spiritual leadership is a cause-and-effect leadership theory for organizational transformation, which 'incorporates vision, hope and faith, and altruistic love, theories of workplace spirituality, and spiritual survival. The purpose of spiritual leadership is to create vision and value congruence across strategic, empowered team and individual levels and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity' (Fry, 2003, p. 693, 695).

Empirical studies to validate the model mostly demonstrate significant positive correlations among employee satisfaction, commitment and organizational productivity. The following table (Table 2.1) summarises a number of studies based on Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory and psychometric instrument.

Table 2. 1 *Empirical Studies of Spiritual Leadership*

Author	Context	Results
Fry, Hannah, Noel, & Walumbwa (2011)	Emerging leaders at a military academy	Correlation among spiritual leadership, organizational commitment, productivity and unit performance
Ayranci & Semercioz (2011)	Top Turkish managers	No common factors found among spiritual leadership, spirituality and religiosity.
Bodia & Ali (2012)	Banking executives in Pakistan	Vision and altruistic love positively influenced calling, membership, job satisfaction, productivity and organizational commitment.
Chen & Yang (2012)	Finance and retail service industries in Taiwan	Spiritual leadership positively influenced employees' perceptions of meaning, calling, membership, and affected altruism and conscientiousness.
Chen et al. (2012)	20 companies in Taiwan and 12 companies in China in manufacturing, financial banking and retailing service industries	Spiritual leadership positively impacted self-career management behavior and unit productivity.
Javanmard (2012)	Iranian Islamic work environment	Positive correlations found between organizational vision and employees' inner life; altruism, faith and sense of work meaningfulness; meaningful work, inner life and work performance.
Hunsaker (2016)	2 firms in the health-care industry in South Korea with 263 collected completed surveys	Positive impact on spiritual leadership on organizational citizenship behavior at both individual and organizational levels.
Fry et al. (2017)	652 individuals from Baldrige recipient organizations ⁴	Positive influence on organizational commitment and unit productivity and life satisfaction, which are considered as crucial for performance excellence.

⁴ The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive. The award focuses on performance in five key areas: Product and process outcomes; Customer outcomes; Workforce outcomes; Leadership and governance outcomes; Financial and market outcomes. Source: <https://www.nist.gov/baldrige/baldrige-award>

Author	Context	Results
Fry & Yang (2017)	Medical laboratories	Reducing employee burnout while positively influencing organizational commitment, productivity, life satisfaction

2.2.3 Critical perspectives on spiritual leadership research

Though there are various studies that have validated Fry's SLT (Fry, 2003), it is not without controversies. For instance, it is criticised for inconsistencies in defining the term 'spirituality' and for using only a mono-method in conducting the research underpinning it.

Fry's understanding of spirituality is based on Horton (1950), Smith (1992), and the Christian perspective (Benefiel, 2005). Though Horton's and Smith's understanding of spirituality tries to provide a broad understanding of spirituality and religion, it is claimed to be naïve and to have remained merely in the domain of the academy (Katz, 1978, 1983, 1992; Price, 1987; Ruffing, 2001; Wilber, 2000; Wilber et al., 1986). Furthermore, there are drawbacks in how Fry's theory and understanding of faith is taken from a specific religious tradition without taking into consideration how spiritual transformation happens (Benefiel, 2005). The approach to spirituality in this theory is aimed at organizational commitment, productivity and financial performance, which is considered to be counter-intuitive (Lips-Wiersma, 2003) and indicative of an attempt to exploit and control employees by top-down management rather than an inward-focused transformation of the self and one's leadership practice (McGhee & Rozuel, 2012).

Other studies of spiritual leadership (Fairholm, 1997, 1998, 2001; Sanders et al., 2002) have posited their own interpretations of spirituality. Fairholm (1997) draws his understanding of spirituality from Jacobson (1995) in a study using a sample of graduate students. According to Benefiel (2005), Fairholm needed to have wider samples and to revisit his definitional characteristics in the spirituality literature. On the other hand, Sanders et al. (2002) have built their transcendental leadership theory based on the broader spirituality literature of Wilber (1977), Fowler (1981) and Parks (2000) for a more solid foundation. However, their theory is at early stage without having critically analysed a range of theories, including spiritual theories (Benefiel, 2005). A recent study of AlSarhi and colleagues (2014) examining Islamic perspectives of leadership found that many aspects of transcendental leadership can be found

in the Qur'an, especially prophetic leadership suggests the importance of interconnectedness between leader, followers and altruistic management for leadership effectiveness.

Research on spiritual leadership to date, however, is mostly based on more recent developments in Fry's theory of spiritual leadership (2003; 2005; 2008). The theory has been tested in a variety of organizations, namely military units, city government, police, and for-profit organizations. Positive relationships have been found between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment, productivity, unit performance and employee life satisfaction (Fry & Matherly, 2006; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Fry et al., 2005; Fry, Nisiewicz, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2007; Malone & Fry, 2003).

However, most of the empirical studies in the field of spirituality in organizations have been quantitative studies (Fornaciari & Dean, 2004) for both studies on workplace spirituality and on spiritual leadership. Ironically, while most of the studies on spirituality in organizations explore its impact on organizational performance and effectiveness, spirituality seeks to go beyond materialistic understanding of value (Gibbons, 2000; Lips-Wiersma, 2000). Thus, spirituality at work becomes a project of the ego, is harnessed for secular outcomes (profit), the desired benefits may not be expected (Gibbons, 2000). There are various concerns that have been raised to illustrate this dilemma (Lips-Wiersma, 2000): 'Does spirituality at work only warrant our attention if it contributes to organizational output?' and 'if spirituality is not linked to materialistic outcomes for the organizations, it may never be taken seriously within the world of work' (p. 13, 15).

There has therefore been a growing epistemological critique of how spirituality is measured (Benefiel, 2005). Even the way the term 'spiritual' in spiritual leadership is defined is problematic. Fornaciari and Dean (2001) suggest that scholars reconsider the 'evidence about the phenomenon of spirituality at work based on a non-positivist way of knowing' (p. 335) such as ethno-methodological, qualitative techniques or even tradition-based stories and other methods rather than positivist ones (Dean, Fornaciari, & McGee, 2003). According to Benefiel et al. (2014), there is a growing concern over the appropriateness of aggregating empirical data at individual-level responses to the higher-level phenomena of unit or organizational levels and determining whether these constructs are valid or not. There has been continuous debate on the aggregation issue in research (Grendstad & Selle, 1997): if

research on spirituality is conceptualised at either the group or organizational level, attention should be paid to how measures can be developed to avoid the pitfalls of measurement and aggregation bias (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Lee, 2003).

In summary, compared to long-standing, mature theories in management, the theory of spiritual leadership is still at a nascent stage. According to Edmondson and McManus (2007), theories at such a stage need ‘development [that] includes understanding how a process unfolds, developing insight about a novel or unusual phenomenon, digging into a paradox, and explaining the occurrence of a surprising event’ (p. 1161–1162). Therefore, multi-method approaches, including qualitative research, may respond better to the concerns about researching spiritual leadership in organizations.

2.2.4 Challenges of spiritual leadership

Demographic cultural factors like globalization, multiculturalism, equality issues, and so on have made organizational workplaces more diverse than ever before (Jackson, 1992; William & O’Reilly, 1998). People from diverse backgrounds are sharing the same workplaces within the increasingly competitive business environment (Burack & Mathys, 1987; Goldstein, 1991; Griggs, 1995; Jamieson & O’Mara, 1991; Loden & Rosener, 1991; Thomas, 1991). Leadership in general, and spiritual leadership in particular, is challenged, and there are an increasing number of calls from scholars to develop leadership practices that are adaptive (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010), responsive to diversity issues cross-culturally (Combs, 2002; Manning, 2003), and are appropriate in compelling contexts with paradoxes of dilemmas (Peus et al., 2016).

Spirituality is perceived and practised differently by different individuals with different belief systems; it is subject to different institutional, social and cultural constraints. Therefore, there are issues of accommodation, bias and discrimination when it comes to spirituality (Krishnakumar et al., 2015). According to Hicks (2002), spiritual leadership in contemporary business management is not about finding a common theology or philosophy among leaders and followers, but about acknowledging the conflicts may arise in a diverse workforce and to effectively help people to work together. He claims that it is a drawback in the literature of spirituality and leadership not to fairly address conflict, which is part of any workplace.

Additionally, Roof (1993, 1999) suggests that the definition of spirituality should move away from a single expression and instead focus on ways that leaders and managers with divergent views of religion and spirituality can work effectively together. Conflict can be a precursor of positive outcomes, as conflicting ideas and policies in politics can lead to a healthy democratic process (Burns, 2002). Fernandez and Barr (1993) argue that differences should not be avoided but expressed so that productive conflict can emerge. Leaders are expected to have open dialogue to share ideas (Hicks, 2002). Additionally, Wheatley (2002) highlights that it is individuals' judgments that divide people, not their differences. It is because of 'mindset' (Rhinesmith, 1992) that some people are more comfortable and effective working in situations with cultural differences while others are not (Hopkins & Hopkins, 1999).

However, it is challenging for leaders to address issues relating to spirituality in the workplace (Hopkins, 1997; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). They face dilemmas, such as whether to allow 'spirit-free zones' and to acknowledge 'holistic personal expressions' or to reject such approaches due to fears and hesitancy regarding possible offence taken by peers and managers (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). This is very much a contemporary issue leaders at large and spiritual leaders in particular are challenged by when addressing religious diversity (Hicks, 2002) in relation to creating harmonious and respectful workplace environments. On the other hand, it is crucial for spiritual leaders to avoid pitfalls in bringing spirituality to the workplace. The more that leaders consider spirituality as an instrument to attain personal and organizational purposes, the more that brings consequences of evangelization, subjugation, seduction and manipulation (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Thus, it is more likely that further research exploring and examining these concerns would benefit more from a multi-method approach than from a mono-quantitative one. Therefore, this study, exploring a specific context, seeks to address context-sensitive leadership practices and the underlying assumptions in forming belief systems and spiritual beliefs. This may potentially contribute to contextualising and examining the challenges of spiritual leadership.

2.2.5 Exploring spiritual leadership in Vietnam

No prior research has been done to explore spiritual leadership in Vietnam, even though the strong spiritual beliefs in the country (see 2.1.4) can have significant impact on leadership practices. The distinctive historical and cultural contexts of Vietnam have shaped typical leadership and managerial practices that are worth exploring, thus helping to identify how

cultural characteristics shape leadership styles in many Asian countries (House et al., 2004; House et al., 2013). More importantly, since the ‘*Đổi mới*’ (renovation policy), Vietnamese management has been trying in its own way to balance tradition and modernity, thus the context under study may critically reveal and respond to a number of contemporary issues, including spiritual leadership practices.

A majority of twenty-first-century scholars believe that modern Vietnam is best understood as an amalgam of values and social norms drawn from the combination of Confucian culture, socialism and globalization (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Bich, 1999; Borton, 2000; London, 2011; McHale, 2002; Truong, 2013). In transitioning toward a market economy (Malesky & Taussig, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2015), Vietnam contains both old central planning values and new sets of market economic principles (Ralston et al., 1997). Traditionally, the Vietnamese management system is heavily dependent on the widespread use of networks (*quan hệ*) adopted from Confucianism and sentimental bonds between individuals (*tình cảm*) and from socialism (Edwards & Phan, 2013). In the view of d’Iribarne (1989), in the contemporary setting there should be a combination of rational-modern and traditional approaches. However, according to Edwards and Phan (2013), traditional and cultural restraints can also be barriers to change. For instance, in Vietnam there are leadership attitudes reflecting collectivism, hierarchy and a preference for saving face and status rather than acquiring new knowledge. However, with the ‘*Đổi mới*’ policy, many changes have been observed, starting with the adaptation of foreign technology (Zhu, 2003), followed by business and management processes (Edwards & Phan, 2013).

In the context of Vietnam, a number of studies have characterised management and leadership practices. Edwards and Phan (2013) found that Vietnamese managers or leaders are self-conscious, inhibited and mediated through modesty and defensiveness. The authors also state that Vietnamese managers tend to be more people-oriented than systems-oriented. They place more importance on norms and social expectations of modesty, and they tend to consult with others before making decisions. Interestingly, Vietnamese leaders find it difficult to accept individual criticism because personal contacts and relationships are valued (Edwards & Phan, 2013). On the other hand, Hall and Hall (1990) claim that Vietnamese managers and leaders tend to communicate in a context-rich manner: they are less direct and explicit. A recent study by Truong and Hallinger (2017) of principle-centred leadership in

Vietnam showed that there are two divergent but potentially complementary styles of leadership, which they term ‘*có uy*’ leadership – demonstrating a leadership style that ‘combines the use of legitimate and moral authority in order to achieve subordinates’ obedience, trust, respect, commitment and emulation’ (p. 17).

Cultural norms, the combination of modern and old sets of values and principles, and spiritual practices including the Spirit and the Buddha sides (see 2.1.4), have a significant impact on leadership and management practices. Studying leadership in contemporary Vietnam from a Buddhist perspective can be not only interesting in itself but can also be helpful in using a critical lens to examine the adaptation of Buddhist principles in a transitional contemporary situation richly embedded in national identity (*bản sắc dân tộc*) and traditional spiritual practices. There are cultural norms that tend to appear contradictory to Buddhist principles. For example, the preference for saving face (Edwards & Phan, 2013) is against the basic principles of non-self and non-attachment. Thus, it would be interesting to see how Buddhist-enacted leadership and practices can co-exist with, or transform, cultural norms and the contemporary context. Studying such a phenomenon may contribute to the value of this research in exploring some of the suggested indexes of ‘interestingness’ as suggested by Davis (1971): indexes of evaluation, co-relation, co-existence, co-variation, opposition and causation.

2.3 Preliminary quantitative study testing Fry’s spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam

This section examines Fry’s spiritual leadership, its applicability and limitations in the transitional context of Vietnam using a quantitative study. The outcome supports Benefiel’s and colleagues’ criticisms of the model and suggests that there are significant limitations of the quantitative approach with the spiritual leadership model in providing an explicit view of spiritual leadership practices in Vietnam. The conclusion is that exploring spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam would benefit more from a qualitative approach.

2.3.1 Purpose of the preliminary quantitative study

The purpose of the preliminary quantitative phase of the study was to examine the applicability of Fry’s spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam. As highlighted in

the previous sections, the weakness of Fry's spiritual leadership model lies in how the model is based on a Christian perspective of spirituality while being tested in different contexts with different religious belief systems. On the other hand, spirituality is a complex term in Vietnam, which is interpreted distinctively due to the country's own traditional folk culture and its adopted culture, values and belief systems from Western cultures during its history of colonization. Furthermore, the increasingly engaged Buddhist practices in people's daily life in Vietnam have also influenced how the Vietnamese perceive things, including leadership practices. Particularly, the 'inner life' construct of Fry's spiritual leadership model refers to mindfulness practices, which again in Buddhism is interpreted distinctively based on wisdom. Therefore, the purpose of the preliminary quantitative study was to examine to what extent Fry's spiritual leadership model can fit in the context of Vietnam and what limitations exist that needs to be further addressed in exploring spiritual leadership in Vietnam and answer the research question of the study.

In other words, the aim of the quantitative phase was to verify the spiritual leadership model and its outcomes and further explore the emergent factors of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership from employees' perspectives. The quantitative analysis consists of statistical analysis of respondents' demographics and responses, factor analysis, structural equation modeling of the spiritual leadership theory tested on the study sample.

2.3.2 Sampling and data collection

The preliminary quantitative phase of this study was used to contextualise the spiritual leadership survey to fit with the scope and context of this research. Data for the quantitative analysis were gathered through the spiritual leadership survey.

2.3.2.1 Sampling

The data for this study were drawn from employees of organization with leaders who were Buddhist. An independent web-based survey site was used and respondents were assured anonymity and used a common terminal at their convenience. Web-based surveys have become popular in gathering data and information both in academia (Roy & Berger, 2005; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998; Sheehan & Hoy, 1999) and in industry (Best & Krueger, 2002).

The questions were uploaded into a web-based interface and a link to the web-based survey included in e-mail correspondence to the head offices of the selected companies to distribute to their employees to for their voluntary participation.

2.3.2.2 The Spiritual Leadership Survey

The survey for the preliminary quantitative phase (Appendix F) consisted of two parts: a demographics part (six questions), section A (42 questions). Section A was adopted from the original spiritual leadership survey of Fry (2016) with the validated scales, with his written permission.

In addition to recording basic demographic information, Section A utilised a five-point Likert-type scale from ‘1- Strongly disagree’ to ‘5 – Strongly agree’ in Section A; and from ‘1 – Not at all’ to ‘5 – To a very great extent’. With all the Likert-type scale questions in Section B, there was space for respondents to provide further explanation or comments on the questions to assist the exploratory purpose of this section.

Section A used Fry’s validated latest version of the Spiritual Leadership Questionnaire (10/2016), which includes vision, hope/faith, inner life, altruistic love, meaning/calling, membership, organizational commitment, productivity, and satisfaction with life, comprising 42 items, as follows:

- Vision: to what extent vision elicits feelings of meaningfulness in employees (four items).
- Hope/faith: employees’ affirmation and assurance of the tasks expected and belief in the achievement of vision/purpose/mission of the organization (four items).
- Inner life: employees’ mindful practice and the need for mindful awareness (seven items).
- Altruistic love: the altruistic love of leaders and the organization in creating a sense of wholeness, harmony and well-being produced through care, concern and appreciation for both self and others (five items).
- Meaning/calling: employees’ sense of meaning and meaningfulness in work (four items).
- Membership: employees’ sense of being understood and appreciated at work (four items).
- Organizational commitment: the degree of employees’ loyalty and attachment to the organization (five items).
- Productivity: employees’ efficiency in producing results, benefits or profits (four items).

- Satisfaction with life: employees' subjective well-being or satisfaction with life as a whole (five items).

2.3.3 Survey analysis

The survey was analysed using a combination of statistical analysis employing the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 22 and confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS version 20, a structural equation modelling program.

Demographic Section

SPSS22 was used to identify the distribution of respondents' gender, age, industries and other related information.

Section A - Test of the spiritual leadership theory model

The study used the methodological approach of structural equation modelling (SEM) for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the suitability of a single-group measurement model (Byrne, 2001). CFA allowed testing whether the specified factors and loadings represented the data of this study (Hair et al., 2006) and to accept or reject a priori theory. CFA also determines construct validity, ensuring accurate measurement by allowing a set of items to accurately correspond to the theoretical latent constructs that the items are measuring and automatically corrects the relationships between constructs for the amount of error variance that exists in construct measures (Hair et al., 2006). In SEM, a model is considered suitable if the covariance structure implied by the model is similar to the covariance structure of the sample data, determined by an acceptable value of goodness-of-fit index (GFI) (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). SEM responses to measurement invariance and examines whether items used in survey instruments mean the same things to members of different groups. If measurement invariance cannot be established, the findings between group differences cannot be interpreted due to attitudinal difference of different psychometric responses to the scale items (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). This approach is suitable for this particular study because it attends to the concerns of using translated versions of survey instruments (Janssens et al., 1995; Reise et al., 1993; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998) and includes groups working in different industries (Drasgow & Kanfer, 1985) and of different genders (Byrne, 1994). With more than three items for each variable in the spiritual leadership theory model, variables can be subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (Byrne, 2012).

SEM is suitable for the spiritual leadership model because it takes a confirmatory approach to multivariate data analysis, which represents the patterns of interrelationships among the spiritual leadership constructs specified in the theory. It is also a versatile approach because it allows multiple and simultaneous relationships between dependent and independent variables (Fry & Matherly, 2006). For example, in the spiritual leadership model, calling is a dependent variable for vision but an independent variable in its relationship with organizational outcomes. SEM also suits the spiritual leadership theory model well for using both latent variables (theoretical constructs that cannot be observed directly in behavioural sciences) and manifest variables. Latent variables cannot be observed directly and are linked to observable variables and manifest variables to make their measurement possible (Byrne, 2012). Path analysis in SEM allows multiple regression, an effective way of measuring complex relationships among variables and structural relations among observed versus latent variables to be modelled (Lei & Wu, 2007). In the model studied, latent variables are vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, inner life, membership, organizational commitment, and productivity; and the manifest variables are measured by the survey questions associated with each latent variable. SEM then establishes the linkages between the latent and manifest constructs as shown below (Figure 2.1).

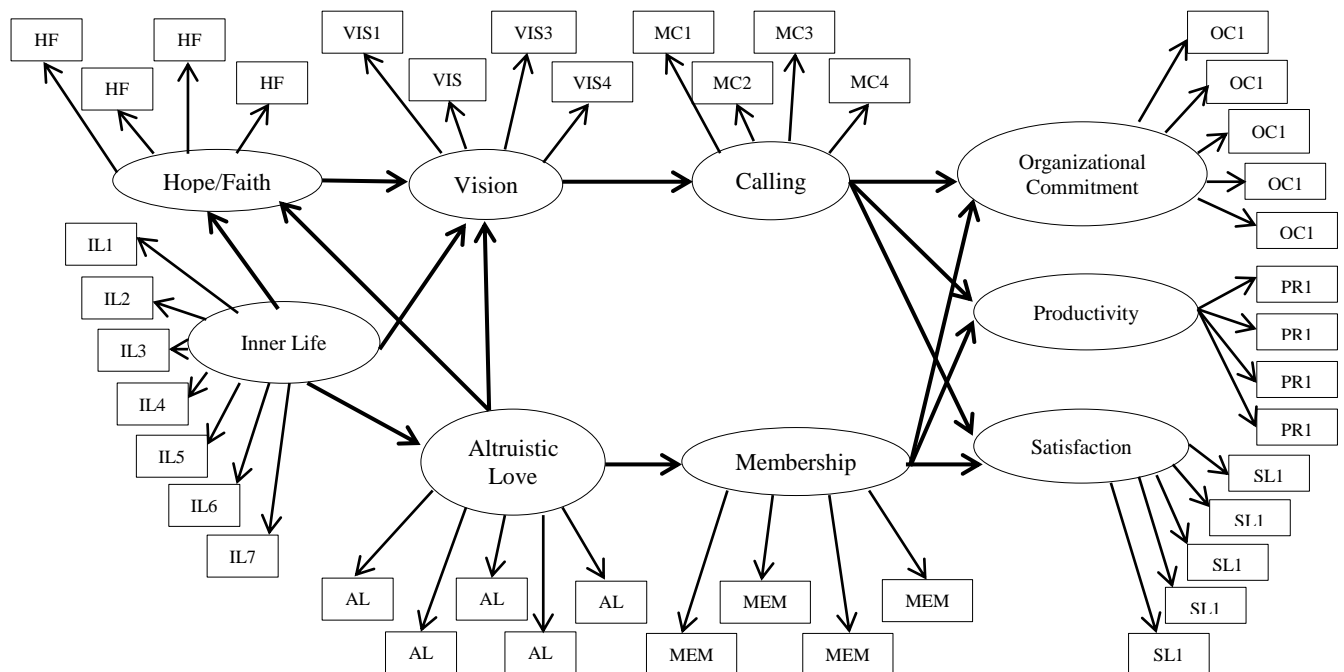


Figure 2. 1 *Figure of the Spiritual Leadership SEM model with latent and manifest constructs.*

2.3.4 Findings of the preliminary study

The following sections demonstrate the main findings of the preliminary study of spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam.

2.3.4.1 Response rates and demographics

Questionnaires numbering 842 were sent to Buddhist respondents' organizations that were willing for employees to participate in the study. A number of leaders refused to allow the distribution of the questionnaires within their organizations because some of them were undergoing internal organizational changes and felt that introducing a questionnaire at that particular stage may result in misleading messages, while others simply did not want to explore their impact of leadership practices because they considered their Buddhist practices to be personal and did not wish to expose personal values and practices to their organizations. The total number of responses received was 397, with 376 usable responses (44.6%). The invalid responses consisted of those with a large number of missing values or inconsistent answers to questions. Table 2.2 shows the response rates in detail.

Table 2. 2 *Summary of Response Rates*

	N (Quantity)	% (Percentage)
Number of questionnaire sent	842	100.0
Response	397	47.1
Valid response	376	44.7
<i>Response rate by sector/industry</i>		
Pharmaceutical	39	10.4
Education	84	22.3
Construction/Real Estate	91	24.2
Hospitality/Service	35	9.3
Information Technology	21	5.6
Printing	40	10.6
Medical	52	13.8
Transportation	14	3.7
Total	376	100.0

Companies in construction/real estate and education industries participated largely in the quantitative phase of the study, followed by companies in the medical, printing, and pharmaceutical industries. The unique characteristics of different industries and sectors

provided additional insights into Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership through open-ended questions analysed later in this chapter.

There was an almost equal distribution of female (52.7%) and male (47.3%) survey respondents. Most of the survey respondents were in active working age groups (18–24 years, 25–34, and 35–44). None was from the age group of 65+ because the retirement age in Vietnam is 55 years for females and 60 years for males. However, there were still three respondents from the age group of 55–64 years because, in the private sector, people tend to retire later than 55 or 60 years, especially those at higher levels within organizations and those with substantial important experience needed in their organizations. Most responses (94.7%) came from subordinates (72.1%), supervisors (15.7%), and managers (6.9%) of the participating organizations. Because the study looked at the impact of the highest-ranking leadership within organizations, a small number of consultants, directors, deputy managers and deputy directors were also involved in this phase (5.3%). Most of the respondents reported directly to managers and directors (87.2%); some reported directly to the CEO (12.8%). Table 2.3 below shows the sample demographics.

Table 2. 3 *Summary of Sample Demographics*

	N (Quantity)	% (Percentage)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	198	52.7
Male	178	47.3
<i>Age</i>		
18–24	52	13.8
25–34	223	59.3
35–44	86	22.9
45–54	12	3.2
55–64	3	0.8
65+	0	0
Total	376	100.0
<i>Positions of respondents</i>		
Subordinate	271	72.1
Supervisor	59	15.7
Manager	26	6.9
Consultant	6	1.6
Director	4	1.1
Deputy Manager	4	1.1
Deputy Director	6	1.6
Total	376	100.0
<i>Positions respondents reporting to</i>		
Manager	113	30.1
Supervisor	81	21.5
Director	113	30.1
CEO	48	12.8
Deputy Director	21	5.6
	376	100.0
Total		

To test the spiritual leadership theory on the study sample, the author conducted exploratory factor analysis, a reliability test using SPSS22 and a confirmatory factor analysis of the relationships in the spiritual leadership theory model using AMOS20.

2.3.4.2 Exploratory factor analysis

To examine the accuracy of the measures in the sample testing the spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measures used. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to explore the data and identify the factors that accurately measure the constructs and to test the specified factors and loadings that actually represent the data (Hair et al., 2006). Since multiple-item measurement scales are subject to a reliability test, their internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha. It is recommended that variables that have items with a total correlation below 0.3 are

excluded from the result (De Vaus, 1996; Bryman & Cramer, 1997). The widely-accepted threshold value for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, and the higher, the better (Field, 2005; Kline, 1999; Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 1998). There is no rule for how high a coefficient should be before it is said to load on a factor.

The initial reliability scores for Cronbach's alpha were as follows: Hope/Faith 0.89, Altruistic love 0.90, Vision 0.91, Membership 0.93, and Calling 0.94. In this study, items that correlated weakly with others (less than 0.3) in unrotated and rotated component matrices were excluded (De Vaus, 1996). Items that were significantly below 0.3 in the variables of inner life, satisfaction, organizational commitment and productivity were omitted. As a result, the reliability scores for Cronbach's alpha of all the remaining variables increased to accepted levels: inner life 0.94, organizational commitment 0.77, productivity 0.77, and satisfaction 0.82. After omitting the weak items, the alpha scores are all above 0.7 (threshold level for reliability), indicating that the scales used in this study sample were sufficiently reliable. It is considered acceptable to omit some items in this study because it involved different organizations in a unique context. Therefore, for example, responses to item IL2 (Question 13: I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing) differ significantly in medical practices, where responsibility is bound to a patient's health and safety compared to less stressful industries such as hospitality or beauty services.

The variables were rotated to increase their interpretability and identify what they represented because a rotated matrix is more favorable to an unrotated matrix in enabling interpretation. They were rotated to maximise the loadings of the items and to identify the conceptual meaning of the factors (Bryman & Cramer, 1997). The pattern matrix of items using principal Axis Factoring with the Promax rotation method and with Kaiser normalization suggested grouping organizational commitment, satisfaction and productivity as one variable – organizational outcomes – for better interpretation in the SEM model.

2.3.4.3 Validity and Reliability

Before testing for the relationship among the variables, it is vital to look at convergent and discriminant validity and reliability in doing a CFA; otherwise, if there is inadequate validity and reliability, it is ineffective to move on to test a relationship. The composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), maximum shared variance (MSV) and average

shared variance (ASV) were calculated to identify any discriminant validity issues and to see whether the latent factors were well explained by their observed variables and whether variables correlate well with each other within a factor (Hair et al., 2006). The threshold values were as follow: CR>.07; AVE>.05; MSV<AVE; ASV<AVE. The study sample meets all the required values and shows no validity concern in moving on to test the model. The following Table 2.4 shows the reliability and validity values.

Table 2. 4 *Reliability and validity test results*

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Inner Life	0.940	0.796	0.154	0.088	0.892						
2 ORG Outcome	0.921	0.628	0.256	0.171	0.393	0.792					
3 Altruistic Love	0.907	0.661	0.303	0.158	0.180	0.359	0.813				
4 Membership	0.930	0.770	0.349	0.177	0.268	0.394	0.550	0.877			
5 Meaning/Calling	0.936	0.786	0.349	0.187	0.279	0.458	0.456	0.591	0.886		
6 Vision	0.914	0.726	0.256	0.157	0.229	0.506	0.469	0.369	0.462	0.852	
7 Hope/Faith	0.861	0.607	0.137	0.082	0.370	0.350	0.232	0.223	0.257	0.251	0.779

2.3.4.4 Confirmatory factor analysis and test of SLT model

The AMOS22 program was used with maximum likelihood estimation to test the model of the spiritual leadership theory (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). CFA is considered a rigorous methodological approach in testing the validity of factor structures within the framework of structural equation modeling (Byrne, 2001).

Results indicated that the spiritual leadership model provided a good fit to the data, based on the following fit indices: Chi-square $\chi^2 = 861.512$; degrees of freedom $df = 453$; $\chi^2/df = 1.902$; comparative fit index (Bentler, 1990) (CFI) = 0.956; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.952; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.49; normed fit index (Bentler & Bonett, 1980) (NFI) = 0.912; and incremental fit index (Bollen, 1989) (IFI) = 0.956. According to Kline (2005) and Hu and Bentler (1995), a model has a satisfactory fit if the chi-square/degrees of freedom is below 3. CFI and TLI have values above 0.95; NFI, IFI, and TLI have values greater than 0.90 (Byrne, 1994); and RMSEA is below 0.5 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). However, MacCallum et al. (1996) note that RMSEA values ranging from 0.08 to 0.10

indicate a mediocre fit, and those greater than 0.10 indicate poor fit. Therefore, the indices provide support that the model fits the data well.

Figure 2.2 below shows the structural model (parameters have been omitted for clarity) with path coefficients indicating the proportion of each variable's variance accounted for by its predictors.

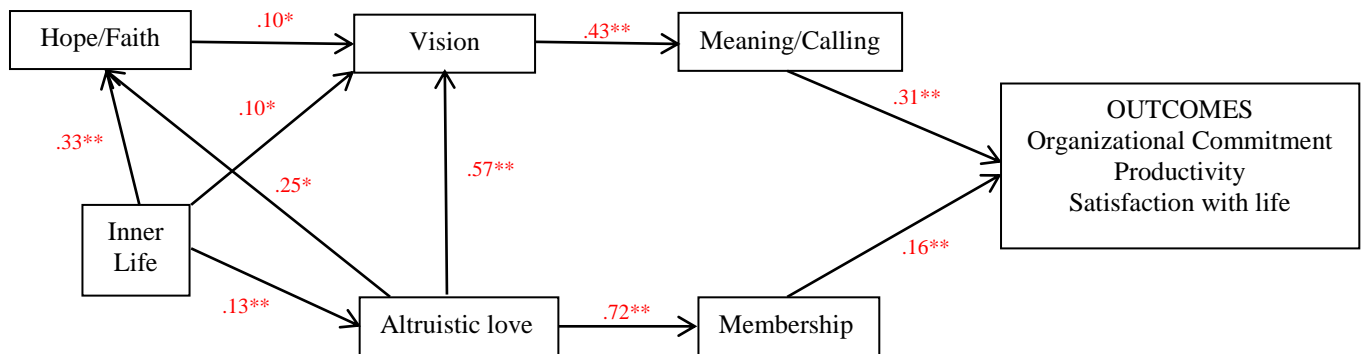


Figure 2. 2 Results of AMOS analysis.

Note: Parameters of each latent variable are omitted for clarity

** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed)

It is evident from this sample that the variance for vision is accounted for by altruistic love more than hope/faith or inner life. Variance for organizational outcomes is accounted for by calling and meaning more than membership. Altruistic love is a strong predictor of both membership and vision. Vision also significantly predicts meaning/calling. Inner life seems to be a stronger predictor of hope/faith rather than of altruistic love or vision. Vision and altruistic love seem to be the strongest predictors of the model, whilst other constructs remain less strong.

Overall, even though the model fits the data, there are a number of weak predictors that need to be addressed. There are some interesting observations from the model. For instance, inner life, which refers to mindfulness practices in Buddhism - a significant practice of Buddhist practice - does not seem to be a strong predictor in the model. Hope/faith - an important source of spirituality - is not a strong predictor for vision. These outcomes suggest the need for further exploration of spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam and the need for a

qualitative approach to reveal the underlying assumptions of distinctive features of spiritual leadership practices that the preliminary quantitative phase has not been able to give answers to. Particularly, it will be useful to explore why mindfulness practices and hope/faith were weak predictors in the spiritual leadership model and how the role of context (if any), especially the transitional context of Vietnam, contributed to such outcome. A qualitative approach will also be useful to examine how spirituality is perceived in Vietnam in general and in leadership practices in particular to explore why hope/faith – considered as significant source of spirituality was not a strong predictor in testing the spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam.

Table 2.5 below illustrates the standardised and unstandardised regression weights, maximum likelihood error and parameter estimates of the model in detail.

Table 2. 5 *Standardised and Unstandardised Parameter Estimates and Maximum Likelihood Errors*

	Standardised parameter estimate	Unstandardised parameter estimate	Z value for parameter estimate	Error estimate
<i>Vision</i>				
Q18	.876	1.094	23.772	.046
Q16	.850	1.038	22.468	.046
Q28	.896	1.000		
Q30	.778	.989	19.110	.052
<i>Altruistic love</i>				
Q1	.753	.842	17.341	.049
Q10	.816	.974	19.691	.049
Q12	.771	.945	18.001	.052
Q22	.850	.973	21.085	.046
Q31	.867	1.000		
<i>Hope/Faith</i>				
Q8	.750	.886	14.846	.060
Q15	.755	.906	14.970	.061
Q16	.803	.998	15.965	.063
Q36	.807	1.000		
<i>Meaning/Calling</i>				
Q2	.875	1.000		
Q4	.930	1.051	26.649	.039
Q17	.892	1.017	24.494	.042
Q23	.846	.961	22.091	.044
<i>Membership</i>				
Q3	.893	.959	27.061	.035
Q9	.886	.985	26.553	.037
Q21	.808	.853	21.659	.039
Q32	.918	1.000		
<i>Inner Life</i>				
Q3	.888	.894	25.795	.035
Q25	.900	.991	26.557	.037
Q41	.879	.918	25.214	.036
Q42	.901	1.000		
<i>Organizational outcome</i>				
Q4	.777	1.097	13.345	.082
Q19	.757	1.138	13.057	.087
Q20	.732	1.137	12.693	.090
Q24	.654	1.000		
Q27	.889	1.364	14.636	.093
Q35	.856	1.315	14.186	.093
Q39	.831	1.257	14.099	.089

*Note: all estimates are significant at $p=0.001$ level (**)*

2.3.4.5 Issues of common-method variance

Common method variance (CMV) refers to issues that arise when correlations or part of them do not represent the actual relationships between variables usually because they were

measures obtained using same method, such as self-rating, and they may provide inflated scores compared to ratings by peers or supervisors. There are various ways to test for a common-method bias to determine whether the statistical and practical significance of predictor variables has been influenced by common-method variances, such as the Harman's single-factor test in SPSS, common latent factor in AMOS, and marker variable in AMOS (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Though many researchers prefer the marker-variable analysis, it is subject to both conceptual and empirical problems and tends to be an issue for independent and dependent variables obtained from a single source (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Following Fry et al.'s (2005) suggestions in testing common-method variance in his spiritual leadership model testing on army transformation, SEM was used to test this because it allows error terms to be intercorrelated without being fixed or constrained in CMV. Modification indices (MI) were used to identify the potential error-term correlations and changes in parameter and chi-square values. Parameter changes were less than 0.15 due to latent variable error correlation. The study used the latest SLT verified survey (Fry, 2016) with a counterbalanced order of items to control priming effects, item-context-induced mood states and other biases relating to item-embeddedness or context questions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The survey also protected respondent anonymity, thus reducing evaluation apprehension.

However, this study has limitations due to single-source bias. Single-source bias occurs when ratings of two constructs are generated by a single source creating artifactual covariance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Spector, 1987). This preliminary research was based on self-reports of respondents, which makes it difficult to know the true nature of relationships between and among variables collected (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). It is difficult to evaluate or distinguish multiple attributes of the same objects, especially when it comes to forming perceptions when collecting data from self-reports because humans use cognitive schema to generalize evaluations (Dipboye & Flanagan, 1979). In leadership studies in general and in this particular preliminary study, there are concerns of single-source data collection (the same rater evaluates leader's behavior and effectiveness) (Avolio et al., 1991), therefore, this preliminary study would have benefitted from incorporating different ways or sources for measuring constructs, such as productivity. Alternatively, separation of measurement (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) could have been used such as collecting measures

in different places, by different media, by combining different techniques to avoid issues of transient mood or effect of straining toward consistency. Additionally, in the transitional context of Vietnam, incorporating observations in examining and measuring leadership behavior and effectiveness could also have strengthened the validity of spiritual leadership.

2.3.5 Interpretation of survey results

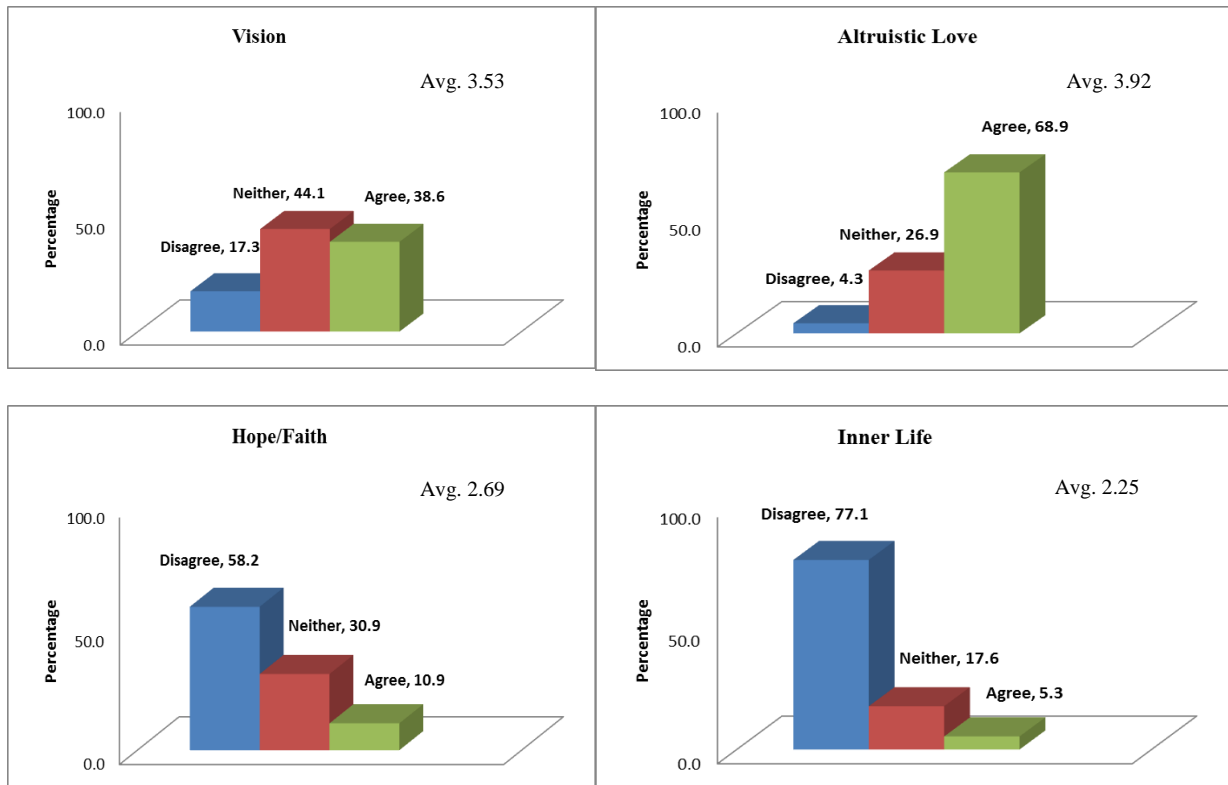
The responses on the seven spiritual leadership variables are shown in Table 2.4 below. The average scale responses are categorised as follows: between 1.00 and 2.99 as ‘disagree’; between 3.00 and 3.99 as ‘neither agree nor disagree’; and between 4 and 5 as ‘agree’.

The results show that there were moderately high (60–70%) levels of agree responses for altruistic love, meaning/calling, and membership, and moderately low (20–39%) levels of agree responses for vision. Inner life showed moderately high levels of mindfulness. Interestingly, there were moderate levels (40–59%) of disagree responses to hope/faith and organizational commitment. Moderate levels (40–59%) of neither agree nor disagree responses were shown for life satisfaction and productivity.

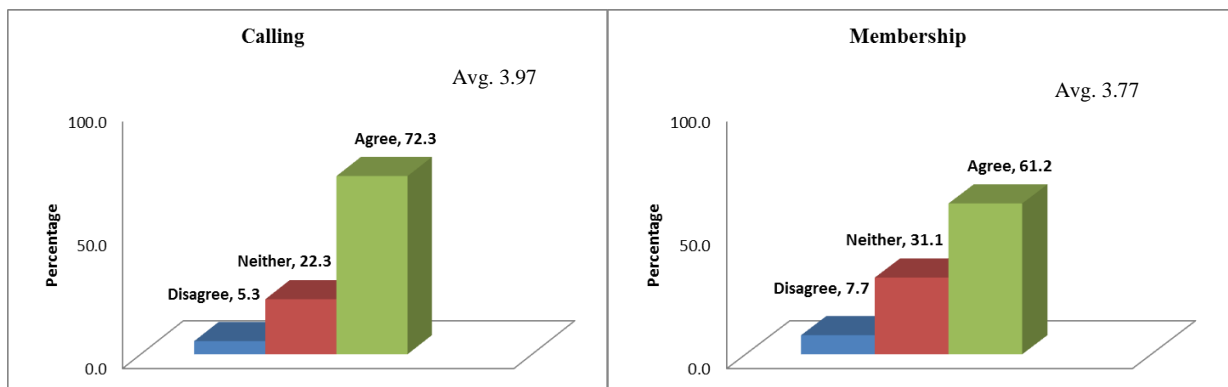
In general, responses indicated moderately positive responses to spiritual leadership variables and spiritual survival variables. These results suggest areas for possible organizational intervention and development. The preliminary study provided unexpected results in terms of the less significant role of mindfulness practices in organizations with Buddhist-enacted leaders and less significant role of hope/faith in a strongly embedded spiritual context like Vietnam. Therefore, the findings suggest the need for further exploration through a qualitative approach to examine and explain how the distinctive context of Vietnam shaped the outcomes of the research.

Table 2. 6 Survey Results for SLT Variables

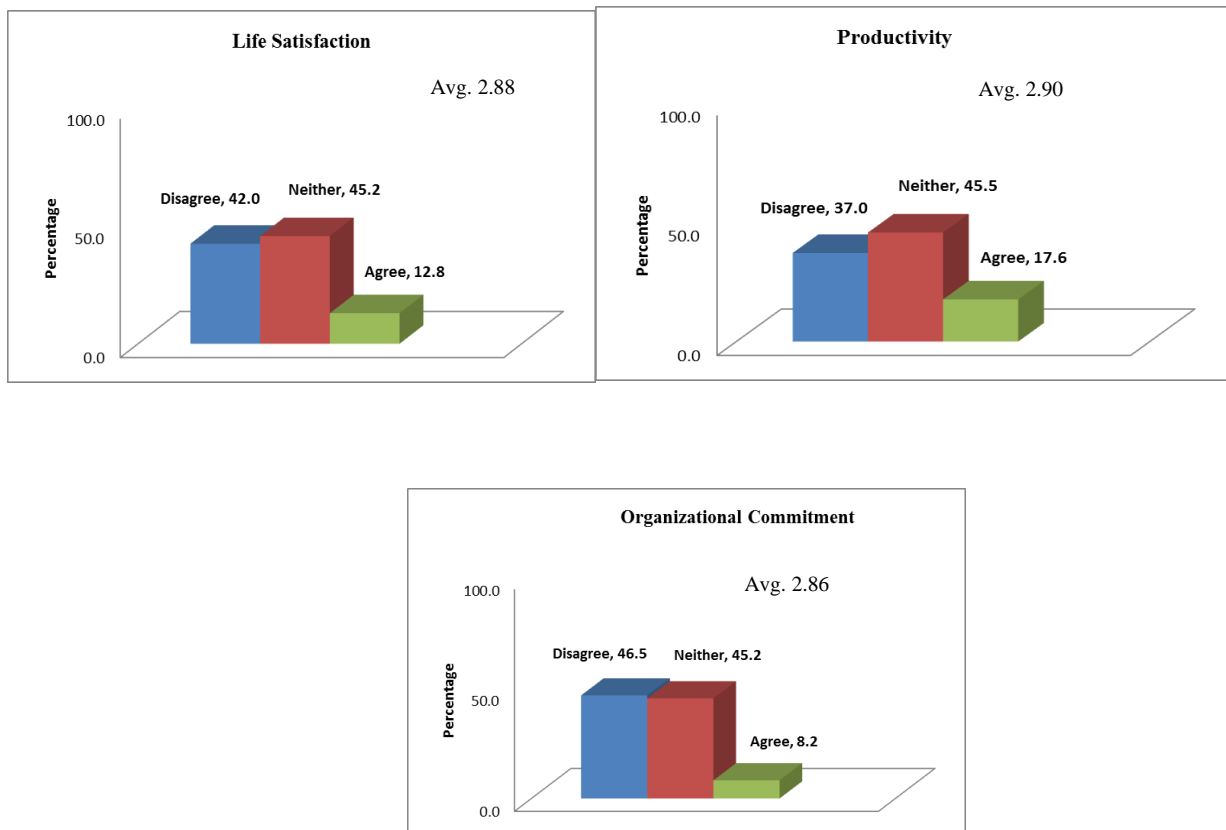
Spiritual Leadership Variables



Spiritual Survival Variables



Organizational Outcomes



2.3.6 Discussion of outcomes of the preliminary quantitative study

The preliminary test of the spiritual leadership theory in the context of Vietnam has reaffirmed a number of limitations of Fry's spiritual leadership model and suggests how the model could benefit more from a qualitative approach.

First, the concept of spirituality is interpreted differently in Vietnam due to a mixture of Western and Eastern cultures, traditional folk spiritual practices and spiritualism. There are various interpretations and different perceptions of different spiritual practices, including different Buddhist practices. Therefore, even though the spiritual leadership model was tested in a context with strongly embedded spirituality and engaged Buddhism like Vietnam, hope/faith was not a strong predictor in the model. This outcome demonstrates the fact that developing and testing the spiritual leadership model with items based on a Christian perspective and definition of spirituality in other cultures with different belief systems has

limitations. In other words, context plays a crucial role in shaping spiritual beliefs (as seen in the context of Vietnam), which needs to be addressed in the model, especially in demonstrating contextually relevant interpretation of spirituality in various cultures and contexts. As suggested by Antonakis, higher-level factors like contextual factors must be identified to support clear theorization in examining the ‘causal effects of endogenous variables on other endogenous variables [...] along with their common causes’ (2017, p. 12). These findings reaffirm criticisms of Fry’s spiritual leadership theory (Benefiel, 2005; Benefiel et al., 2014; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; McGhee & Rozuel, 2012) and the need for a context theory of spiritual leadership. Additionally, as highlighted by various scholars (Benefiel et al., 2014; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; McGhee & Rozuel, 2012; Vu & Gill, 2018), the application of spirituality in general and in leadership in particular is a transformational journey, which can be more effectively examined with qualitative study, particularly with a longitudinal study rather than a cross-cultural quantitative one.

Second, Fry’s spiritual leadership model has limitations due to common method variance. Examining leaders’ behavior and outcomes based on respondents’ self-reports generates single-source bias. In addition, in the contemporary complex transitional context of Vietnam with leaders pursuing various Buddhist practices and traditions, leadership behavior and leadership effectiveness cannot be sufficiently addressed by a single source, especially when context plays a crucial role in how leaders apply specific Buddhist practices and how context shapes distinctive leadership behaviours. Therefore, examining and exploring spiritual leadership in Vietnam to reveal the underlying assumptions and how local context shapes and affects leadership outcomes cannot be achieved through a mono-quantitative method relying on a single source. This informs the need to conduct a qualitative study from various sources and techniques to capture the holistic picture of spiritual leadership practices in Vietnam and the impacts of complex individual practices as well as institutional and spiritual logics affecting contemporary leadership practices.

Lastly, the weak predictor ‘inner life’ in the tested spiritual leadership model suggests that there is a need to review the concept/definition of mindfulness and related items of the ‘inner life’ construct in the model. While mindfulness is an important practice in Buddhism, and especially in countries with engaged Buddhism like Vietnam, it was not a strong predictor in the model. This outcome highlights the necessity to revisit and contextualize the ‘inner life’

construct taking into consideration the fact that mindfulness practices are not just merely about moment-awareness, but also about wisdom articulation and experience accumulation (Purser & Millilo, 2015).

In summary, the preliminary quantitative study of examining Fry's spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam suggest that the mono-quantitative method is not sufficient to fully understand spiritual leadership practices in the context of Vietnam. To answer the research question of the study, there is a need to conduct a qualitative study with various methods and multiple sources to unveil important impacts of the complex nature of the transitional context and distinctive leadership practices shaped by different Buddhist practices and philosophies. It is also suggested that qualitative research, especially in different contexts such as a transitional context underlined by the social movement of engaged Buddhism, can contribute contextual insights about leadership phenomena (Antonakis, 2017)

Chapter Three: Positioning and comparing spiritual leadership with other relevant leadership theories

This chapter aims at reviewing and comparing spiritual leadership in relation to other relevant leadership theories such as servant leadership, ethical leadership, responsible leadership and authentic leadership to justify its practicability and applicability as the foundation to explore Buddhist-enacted leadership in the context of Vietnam to address the research question of the study.

3.1 Spiritual leadership vs. servant leadership

Both spiritual and servant leadership are considered as emerging theories of leadership (Dinh et al., 2014). While spiritual leadership was proposed at the end of 1990s by Fairholm (1996, 1998), Biberman and colleagues (1999), Mitroff and Denton (1999), Cacioppe (2000), and most recently Fry (2003, 2005), servant leadership theory was proposed earlier by Greeleaf (1970).

Servant leadership is about the service of a leader towards followers with the commitment to serve people (Parris & Peachey, 2013). The concept of servant leadership is not about leading first, but about serving first, taking care of followers, which leads to an aspiration to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). Spears (2002) identified ten servant leadership characteristics, while Anderson and Sun (2017) have synthesized twelve conceptual dimensions after reviewing a number of studies of servant leadership (Barbutto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al, 2008; Sendjaya et al, 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), namely altruistic calling, persuasive mapping, courage, agapao love, emotional healing, forgiveness, humility, covenantal relationship, behaving ethically, authenticity, creating value for the community and accountability.

Spiritual leadership on the other hand is concerned in the corporate world about the importance of achieving both company and social growth through membership and calling through ethical and spiritual values and sharing a particular way of managing companies (Beazley & Gemmill, 2005; Nicolae et al., 2013) and supporting employees transcendence, abilities to self-motivate, spiritual wellbeing and personal calling (Fry, 2003; 2005).

These two leadership theories share a number of commonalities. Both models are supported by intrinsic motivation, membership and commitment (Contreras, 2016). They both highlight moral and inspirational perspectives of leadership by creating a transitional organizational context to achieve organizational goals and social purposes. Leader-follower relationship in both models is also considered significant for effective leadership. Both models have been criticized for lack of conceptual and academic consensus (Contreras, 2016). For instance, servant leadership is criticized for academic arguments based on philosophical and religious viewpoints based on Christianity (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), and for being vague about the outcomes with regard to unit or organizational performance and how to solve conflict when the needs of the organization are incompatible with the expected welfare of the organizational members (Yukl, 2010). Spiritual leadership on the other hand is criticised for being based on confused definitions that have delayed advances in the field (Dent et al, 2005), and it is not clear which values are more important than others and how an individual becomes a spiritual leader through what life experiences or spiritual values (Yukl, 2010). More empirical studies are needed for both models to identify facilitating conditions or antecedent conditions that have effects on these leadership models and more empirical evidence to support their academic robustness (Contreras, 2016; Yukl, 2010).

In summary, both spiritual and servant leadership share some common characteristics, and while servant leadership is more concerned about the moral behaviour of the leader and the welfare and wellbeing of followers, spiritual leadership relates more to leaders' spiritual values towards organisational behaviour and performance (Contreras, 2016). However, some studies also suggest that servant leadership has a positive influence on team performance (Hu & Liden, 2011; Irving & Longbotham, 2007; Schaubroeck et al, 2011) and firm performance at the firm level (Peterson et al, 2012), and improves employees' job satisfaction and work engagement (van Dierendonck et al, 2014).

3.2 Spiritual leadership vs. ethical leadership

Brown and colleagues have defined ethical leadership as 'the demonstration of normative appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making' (2005, p.120). In other words, ethical leadership is based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) to encourage followers to engage in ethical behaviours while leaders

in their leadership roles seek to do the right things in an ethical manner (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Social theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) reflects the idea that individuals can learn from values and behaviour from credible models; thus it helps to explain how and why ethical leader influence followers. Brown and colleagues (2005) differentiated ethical leadership from other positive leadership forms in some characteristics, such as including ethical rather than ancillary dimensions of leadership and leaders having moral traits and behaviours. Empirical studies suggest that, at an individual level, ethical leadership facilitates employees' willingness to report problems (Brown et al., 2005) and employees' 'voice' (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). At group level, ethical leadership is positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviour and negatively associated with unit-level unethical behaviour and relationship conflicts (Mayer et al., 2012), while at the organizational level, ethical leadership can help to reduce business costs (Thomas et al., 2004).

On the other hand, ethical leadership has been criticized for its vagueness since it is unclear what constitutes normative ethical behaviour (Eisenbeiss, 2012) and it is heavily built upon a Western perspective (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Based on this argument, Eisenbeiss (2012) identified the following characteristics for ethical leadership based on both Western and Eastern moral philosophies: humane orientation, justice orientation, responsibility and sustainability orientation, and moderation orientation. Additionally, a number of scholars have suggested a number of useful research questions to understand more about the determinants and consequences of ethical leadership, such as the language, conditions and process by which ethical issues are communicated and ethical dilemmas are solved (Kahn, 1990); the extent of relationship between ethical leaders with their levels of authority, power, with lower level managers and with employees' outcomes (Brown & Treviño, 2006); and the relationship between cognitive processes with the inconsistencies between ethical judgement and leader behaviour (Reynolds, 2006). Recently, Hannah and colleagues (2014) highlighted that most studies provide little prescriptive information of forms of ethical behaviours because studies mostly evaluate leaders' ethical behaviour from followers' perspectives only.

In comparing spiritual leadership to ethical leadership, according to Johnson (2009), personal and workplace spirituality can equip leaders for the task of ethical leadership by generating feelings of hope and joy, providing sense of mission and meaning, focusing on the needs of others, fostering integrity, humanity and justice, and creating universal moral principles. In

this sense, ethical leadership is somewhat similar and overlaps with the concept of spiritual leadership. For instance, 'spiritual leadership is also demonstrated through behaviour, whether in individual reflective practice or in the ethical, compassionate and respectful treatment of others' (Reave, 2005, p.663). Furthermore, both spiritual and ethical leadership are altruistically motivated to show genuine care for followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). The emphasis on integrity and altruism in spiritual leadership also overlaps with the conceptualization of the ethical dimensions of leadership. However, spiritual leadership differs from ethical leadership in its association with service to humanity through 'calling', which can motivate an individual to become an ethical leader; however, ethical leadership can be driven by pragmatic concerns and influencing mechanisms which include certain transactional leadership styles (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Therefore, the main departure of ethical leadership from other leadership theories such as spiritual leadership and transformational leadership is its emphasis on achieving ethical standards and conduct of followers through leaders' pro-activeness.

3.3 Responsible leadership vs. spiritual leadership

Scholars have been trying to integrate concepts of ethics, leadership and corporate social responsibility in what Doh and Quigley (2014) describe as a loosely defined concept of responsible leadership (Ciulla, 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Doh & Stumpf, 2005; Maak, 2007; Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless et al., 2012; Voegtlin et al., 2012; Waldman & Galvin, 2008). Responsible leadership is defined as a 'relational and ethical phenomenon, which occurs in social processes of interaction with those who affect or are affected by leadership and have a stake in the purpose and vision of leadership relationship' (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 103). In other words, responsible leadership focuses on leaders' responsibilities in relation to stakeholders. As defined by Pless (2007), responsible leadership is based on 'relationship between leaders and stakeholders who are connected through a shared sense of meaning and purpose through which they raise one another to higher levels of motivation and commitment for achieving sustainable values creation and social change' (p. 438). This somewhat resembles Bass's (1998) transformational leadership characteristics. A responsible leader is the one who espouses corporate responsibility by 'being an active citizen and promoting active citizenship inside and outside the organization' (Pless, 2007, p. 450).

Empirical studies show that responsible leadership has positive influence on macro, meso and micro levels of outcomes (Voegtlin et al., 2012). For instance, responsible leaders can be role models at micro level, which can influence followers to have higher levels of motivation, commitment, organisational citizenship or job satisfaction. However, there are also concerns of studying responsible leadership in terms of processes and outcomes, prioritizing some particular stakeholders over others, training and development of responsible leadership, the impact of macro level context and forces, and inconsistencies in measurement and assessment (Waldman & Balven, 2014). For instance, it is challenging in responsible leadership to prioritize in considering limitless number of stakeholders: occasionally, a leader may be responsible to one stakeholder group but may end up being neglectful to others (Doh & Quigley, 2014). Therefore, studies of responsible leadership can benefit from more focus on its process issues, issues with communication and knowledge sharing in prioritizing stakeholder groups (Doh & Quigley, 2014).

In comparing responsible leadership to other relevant theories, there are some overlaps. For example, responsible leadership is similar to ethical leadership in emphasizing the positive role model, ethical standards, pro-social conduct in organizations, and moral reasoning in decision-making (Treviño et al., 2000, 2003). Responsible leadership and servant leadership as both normative forms of leadership in nature (Pless & Maak, 2011) also share some commonalities in how leaders can serve the needs and interests of others (Greenleaf, 2002) by demonstrating genuine care and concern for others, bringing service and meaning together (Sendjaya et al., 2008) and encouraging one another to ‘higher levels of motivation and morality’ (Burns, 1978, p. 20). With authentic leadership, responsible leadership tends to overlap with authentic leadership for its self-awareness and self-regulation components (Pless & Maak, 2005) and its aims for positive organization outcomes (Maak, 2007; Pless, 2007).

However, responsible leadership is also different from other theories in a number of ways. Ethical leadership mainly concerns the ‘classical leadership dyad of leader-subordinate’ while responsible leadership has a relational point of view in ‘leader-stakeholder relationships’ (Pless & Maak, 2011, p. 6). As a result, ethical leadership has a micro-level perspective and looks at organizational contextual factors; responsible leadership looks at multilevel outcomes and addresses the cultural context, including power distance and humane orientation (Pless & Maak, 2008, 2011). With servant leadership, responsible leadership is

different in not aiming at ‘self-sacrificial servanthood’ (Sendjaya et al, 2008, p. 405), as in servant leadership, but linking service to fulfil the ‘needs of stakeholders throughout business and society’ (Pless & Maak, 2011, p. 6). Responsible leadership is not just concerned about positive organizational outcomes with authentic leadership, but also considers contributions to social capital, and making positive social changes in relation to stakeholders in both business and society (Maak, 2007; Pless, 2007), based on more than just positive psychological resources but also based on ethical qualities, moral awareness, ethical reflection, and moral deliberation in decision-making and in reconciling ethical dilemmas (Pless & Maak, 2011; Werhane, 1999).

Compared with spiritual leadership, both responsible and spiritual leaders are intrinsically motivated; however, responsible leaders are not necessarily driven by spirituality or inner calling like spiritual leaders (Pless & Maak, 2011). Both leadership theories are concerned with positive organisational outcomes; however, spiritual leadership emphasizes spiritual influences through calling and membership, whereas responsible leadership emphasizes the relational perspective of leader with various stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the spiritual leadership model of Fry (2003, 2005) examines organisational outcomes only; however, responsible leadership is concerned with multilevel outcomes and especially the cultural context, which is lacking in the spiritual leadership model.

3.4 Authentic leadership vs. spiritual leadership

Authentic leadership is another emerging leadership style (Dinh et al., 2014; Hoch et al., 2018) that provides another perspective on ethical leadership (Yukl, 2010). *The Leadership Quarterly* published a special issue on authentic leadership in 2005 (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In defining authentic leadership, there are different versions of conceptualization (Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005); however, they all emphasize the consistency in leaders’ words, actions and values, including self-awareness and trust building in leader-follower relationships (Yukl, 2010). In other words, authentic leaders are those who are ‘deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge and strengths’ (Avolio et al, 2004, p. 802).

According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), authentic leadership is a 'root concept' that represents various positive leadership styles by examining leaders' genuine intentions to followers and organizations and is identified through dimensions such as self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, positive psychological capital, positive moral perspective, and authentic behaviour. Furthermore, authentic leadership can be a social support resource for followers (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) by establishing trust in leader-follower relationships (Peus et al., 2012) and communicating leaders' values to generate an environment that can foster favourable conditions for followers to be authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Leroy et al., 2015).

Like all other leadership styles, authentic leadership has been criticized for its conceptual ambiguity because of the inconsistencies in framing it as a multilevel phenomenon and characterizing it at an individual level only (Yammarino et al., 2008) and also because of limited studies on examining authentic leadership beyond the workplace (Braun & Nieberle, 2017). According to Yukl (2010), assessment of authenticity is another challenge for authentic leadership, especially when followers are different in terms of belief systems, values, ethnicity, religion, gender and so on. Therefore, further studies on authentic leadership would benefit from addressing these concerns.

In comparing authentic leadership to other relevant leadership theories, there are a number of overlaps. For instance, authentic leaders are similar to ethical leaders for having social motivation and consideration for ethical consequences of their actions (Brown & Treviño, 2006), and both forms of leadership may help followers in facing moral dilemmas (Braun & Nieberle, 2017). Authentic leadership is also similar to servant leadership because authentic leaders 'show to others that they genuinely desire to understand their own leadership to serve others more effectively' (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 96) and they both emphasize personal integrity (Braun & Nieberle, 2017). A number of scholars claim that the conceptualizations and definitions of authentic leadership do not distinguish it sufficiently from transformational leadership (Gardner et al., 2011; Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). More specifically, studies show that some authentic leadership dimensions correlated highly with transformational leadership, and some positive organizational behavioural states like optimism, resilience and hope also relate to transformational leadership (Garner et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Because of such overlaps exist, it is claimed that 'authentic

leadership is a requirement for all transformational, servant, ethical, spiritual and perhaps ideological leadership' (Anderson & Sun, 2017, p. 88)

However, what is distinctive about authentic leadership is that it is based on positive attributes such as hope, optimism, resiliency, the ability to judge ambiguous ethical issues from multiple perspectives, making decisions based on moral values, and reflecting self-awareness, openness, transparency and consistency as its core dimensions (Brown & Treviño, 2006). It is different from ethical leadership in the way that authenticity and self-awareness are not part of the ethical leadership construct (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Treviño et al., 2000). And with its core dimensions such as self-awareness and relational transparency, authentic leadership can provide followers with resources beyond ethical leadership, such as instrumental, informational, emotional and appraisal support (Braun & Nieberle, 2017). Compared to servant leadership, while servant leadership is more about generating a serving culture for followers to learn to put the needs of other above themselves (Liden et al., 2014), authentic leadership is more about 'nurturing and protecting followers' resources' (Braun & Niberle, 2017, p. 781). Moreover, authentic leadership covers wider interpersonal processes (personal identification, social identification, emotional contagion, social exchange) and follower characteristics (self-awareness, perception and agreement with leader values) (Yukl, 2010). It is also claimed that authentic leadership can be distinguished using confirmatory factor analyses (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011; Walumbwa et al, 2008).

In comparison to spiritual leadership, authentic leadership and spiritual leadership are both normative theories of ideal leadership with emphasis on leader-follower interpersonal relationship and benefits of value-based organizational culture based on respect, loyalty, cooperation, openness; and positive values and attributes, such as altruism, compassion, empathy, humility, fairness, honesty, and kindness (Yukl, 2010). However, authentic leadership is based on the positive psychology of self-regulation, whereas spiritual leadership is based on values and concepts adopted from religious and spiritual perspectives and only some aspects of positive psychology, as in Fry's (2005) model (Yukl, 2010).

3.5 Summary of evaluation of spiritual leadership among other leadership theories

The foregoing leadership theories, including spiritual leadership, are considered to be emerging leadership theories (Dinh et al., 2014; Hoch et al., 2018). The literature shows that

there are significant conceptual overlaps among spiritual leadership, responsible leadership, ethical leadership and authentic leadership as normative and positive forms of leadership. The review of these leadership theories in this chapter is not for the purpose of examining which leadership theory is more developed or advanced than another, but to acknowledge the overlaps and differences of these leadership styles and to see how spiritual leadership is positioned among them and how it can contribute to this specific study in answering the research question. Though spiritual leadership shares some common characteristics or dimensions with other relevant leadership theories, it is distinctive in a number of ways.

First, spiritual leadership is guided by spirituality or religious faith to cultivate positive organizational culture and organizational outcomes, which is not necessarily the case for other leadership forms. Leaders can be ethical, based on social learning theory and ethical standards; they can be a servant, based on moral behaviour and self-sacrifice of the leader for the welfare of followers; they can be responsible, based on relationships between the leader and stakeholder groups; and they can be authentic, based on relational authenticity and positive psychological capital, to mention a few. These leadership theories do not emphasize the belief in spiritual or religious values and practices to attain positive leadership practices as spiritual leadership theory does.

Second, the components of spiritual leadership theory are based on the definition of spirituality and spiritual values, like Fry's spiritual leadership (e.g. hope, inner life, calling, membership, etc.), which is not the case for other relevant leadership theories. For example, for authentic leadership, self-awareness and relational transparency are important dimensions; and for ethical leadership, ethical dimensions and standards are important for leaders' proactiveness, which can involve pragmatic concerns.

Therefore, to examine leadership from a Buddhist perspective as stated in the research question of this study, spiritual leadership theory is applicable for a number of reasons. First, though Buddhism is regarded diversely as a religion, philosophy or psychology, it is still based on a belief system or faith. Buddhist practice is a life-long practice that involves faith or belief in Buddhist principles to be able to fully comprehend and practise them, either in life generally or in workplaces and in leadership roles. Second, sense of 'calling' is important in exploring Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in Vietnam because Vietnam is a

spiritually-embedded society (see the previous chapter). Moreover, spirituality is interpreted distinctively in Vietnam with the combination of traditional folk practices and adopted spiritual values from other cultures. Therefore, examining spiritual leadership in this context helps to verify the controversial spiritual aspects in spiritual leadership. In the transitional context of Vietnam, it is also important to examine how ‘calling’ is shaped and how institutional and social contexts of a nation in transition have influenced the sense of calling in Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in organisations.

3.6 Justification for utilizing Fry’s spiritual leadership as the foundation to explore Buddhist-enacted leadership practices

To answer the research question of this study in exploring Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in Vietnam, and based on the preliminary quantitative study in the previous chapter, the following research phase of the study is based on Fry’s spiritual leadership model. There are a number of reasons why Fry’s spiritual leadership model was chosen:

First, the limitations of the preliminary quantitative phase suggest that there are significant issues that can be further explained and explored with a further qualitative study. For instance, in the context of Vietnam, with its strong traditional and folk spiritual values, hope/faith should be an important factor; however it remained a less significant predictor in Fry’s spiritual leadership model. Further explanation is needed to understand this outcome from the preliminary quantitative study and to explore the potential contextual factor impacting this outcome (including the institutional and social aspects) to grasp a holistic picture of the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in the context of Vietnam. On the other hand, inner life, referring to mindfulness practices in Fry’s model, also remained a weak predictor, even though mindfulness practices are one of the core practices in Buddhism. Further research is needed to explore this concern, especially in examining the validity of the ‘inner life’ construct in Fry’s spiritual leadership model, because ‘inner life’ in the model is mostly reflected through moment awareness, whereas, in Buddhism, mindfulness is beyond moment awareness, which also involves experience and wisdom accumulation (Purser & Millilo, 2015). Additionally, the limitations of single-source self-report bias in the preliminary quantitative phase suggest that exploring Buddhist-enacted leadership will benefit from data from multiple sources in examining its formation and outcome, in particular from both leaders’ and employees’ perspectives.

Second, the components of Fry's spiritual leadership model (e.g. hope/faith, vision, inner life, altruistic love, calling, membership, productivity, etc.) implicitly provide a relatively holistic journey of how spiritual hope/faith shape leadership vision, influencing altruistic love and calling that impact on organizational outcomes. Utilizing such components as the foundation to guide the exploratory phase of the study helps the exploration of how leaders enact Buddhist principles and concepts in their leadership, which specific principles they apply to form their vision, altruistic love or calling and why, and how such enactments and applications of Buddhist principles influence organizational outcomes. Such an approach would also help to explain how Buddhism is interpreted and applied in the transitional context of Vietnam by leaders. It can also guide the exploration from employees' perspectives in examining the outcome of the enactment of Buddhist principles and practice in leadership and thereby provide a sufficient response to the research question.

Third, examining Fry's spiritual leadership model in the complex transitional context of Vietnam can contribute to the validation of criticisms of the model on whether basing the model on a Christian perspective of spirituality is applicable in the Eastern Buddhist context of Vietnam. In addition, further exploring Fry's spiritual leadership model from a qualitative approach responds to the call of Benefiel and colleagues (2014) for more qualitative studies exploring the spiritual aspects of spiritual leadership rather than depending on the mono-quantitative methods that most studies on spiritual leadership use.

Therefore, in considering the research context, the potential relevant theories to examine Buddhist-enacted leadership, and scholarly calls for diverse methodological approaches to study spiritual leadership, this study uses Fry's spiritual leadership as the foundation to further explore Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in Vietnam from both leaders' and employees' perspectives.

Chapter Four: Buddhism, engaged Buddhism in Vietnam and the application of Buddhist principles in organizational studies

This chapter introduces and reviews Buddhist concepts and demonstrates how they have been applied in organisational studies. The chapter also justifies how some relevant Buddhist principles can be effectively applied in leadership practices and contributes to the exploration of the research question of this study.

4.1 Buddhism and its application in a contemporary context

This section introduces Buddhist principles, their relevance, and their application in a contemporary milieu, especially in contemporary management. The section also reviews Buddhism in Vietnam and its impact on the Vietnamese people. What follows also highlights how incorporating Buddhist perspectives in this study responds to a number of contemporary concerns.

4.1.1 Buddhism: religion, philosophy, or psychology?

The Buddha did not claim himself to be a god or god manifested in human form with external power, but a simple human being like anybody else (Rahula, 1974). The significance in Buddhism is the fact that the Buddha was just an ordinary man, and the way he achieved the state of enlightenment is applicable and available to everyone (Mikulas, 2007). Buddhism has no dogmas, no rituals, no worship, no saviour, no personal deity, no god, but instead a set of practices of living life that one might find useful to apply (Khantipalo, 1992; Nyanaponika, 1986; Rahula, 1974; Snelling, 1999). The Buddha's community was educational, not religious, and the community was prohibited from involvement with religious practices by the Buddha himself because Buddhism is more about practices rather than religious rituals; therefore, the Buddha did not want to establish a religion (Mikulas, 2007). In addition, according to Daniels (2005), Buddhism is about practising, learning, transforming with rational and logical guides to understand the universe and positive behaviour, rather than questioning or praising the existence of a supreme authority as in most religions.

Buddhism is therefore more like psychology or philosophy with an ethical view, epistemological way of thinking and a way of living life rather than a conventional religion (Banerjee, 1978; Cooper & James, 2005; Daniels, 1998; Johansen & Gopalakrishna, 2006; Marques, 2010; Nelson, 2000). However, according to Rahula (1974), the Buddha tried to avoid philosophizing his teachings since he did not consider it useful for Buddhist practices. Puntasen (2007) and Prayukvong and Rees (2010) support such a view as, according to them, Buddhism is not a faith or system of belief but an empirically tested theory. Practice helps to understand one's own life and way of living and to train one's mind. In addition, Buddhist practice aims at reducing suffering independent of any belief in the cosmology (Mikulas, 2007). The interpretation of Buddhism as a religion or philosophy can somehow be helpful, but from the perspective of essential Buddhism, the Buddha himself warned about being attached to or trapped by any particular views, opinions or rituals. On the other hand, De Silva (2000) claims that Buddhism can be considered a psychology for its expressions and teachings about sensation, perception, emotion, cognition, mind and consciousness.

There are clearly controversial views on how scholars interpret Buddhism. Rather than participating in scholarly discussions on defining Buddhism as a religion, philosophy or psychology, this study aims at looking at how Buddhism is actually practised and is engaged in the complex and tricky contemporary nature of the business environment in the specific context of Vietnam. Such an approach likely reveals challenges and opportunities in applying Buddhism to contemporary management and leadership practices. Incorporating Buddhism in exploring spiritual leadership practices in Vietnam also helps to examine the role of hope/faith from a Buddhist perspective in shaping Buddhist-enacted leadership practices, which appeared to be a weak predictor in the spiritual leadership model tested in the preliminary quantitative phase of the study.

4.1.2 Buddhism and engaged Buddhism in Vietnam

Vietnamese Buddhism has a long history of cross-cultural influences from China and Western countries. Buddhism has existed in Vietnam for over 2,000 years, becoming the dominant ideology, affecting cultural, economic, religious and political life in the country. Buddhism first came to Vietnam by way of China and India. At first, Vietnamese Buddhism was heavily influenced by China, reflecting a mixture of Taoism, Confucianism, ancestor worship and local deities (Topmiller, 2000). This has significantly changed in contemporary

Vietnam, where Buddhism is perceived as practices engaged during everyday activities rather than emphasising worshipping or rituals. Buddhism under the dynasties of the Ly (1010–1225) and the Tran (1225–1400) was flourishing with its role and responsibility in government policy. However, during the Le dynasty (1428–1788), Confucianism became the dominant ideology of the ruling officials, thus ‘Confucianist principles prevailed upon Buddhist tenets’ (Ta, 1989, p. 4) and thereby ‘the three religions’ coexisted – Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Later on, the colonised period of the country under the French and Americans established a more diverse religious stance in the country.

It is important to note that, unlike other Buddhist countries such as Thailand, Buddhism is not the state religion. In fact, because of Western interventions and colonization for many years (by the French in the North and the Americans in the South), ‘Vietnam never had a state religion integrating the whole population’ (Houtart, 1976, p. 36). Vietnam also experienced religious conflicts in the South, where Catholics represented 10% of the population, a conflict that has not been seen to develop in countries with a declared Buddhist state religion (Houtart, 1976). In Vietnam, there is also an acknowledgment and admiration of the physical environment, family, and local and national ancestors, with spiritual and worshipful practices with no scripture, doctrine or clergy. These practices have significant impact on the Vietnamese people and should not be omitted when exploring Vietnamese religion (Pelzer, 1992). When the Buddha Sangha Association of Vietnam (a religious organization and political platform for monks) was founded in 1952 by the Venerable Thich Tri Quang (Bechert, 1984, p. 328), it did not have significant influence on the national scene nor have any political overtones due to the policy in Northern Vietnam in 1946 to separate state and religion (Houtart, 1976). Even after the country’s reunification in 1975, Buddhism was separated from politics. The government sponsored and controlled Buddhist religious associations in the country, so Buddhism could not respond to the country’s need to address considerable social ills left over from the war (Topmiller, 2000, p. 235). People are free to choose their religion, but ‘freedom of religion’ as understood in the West is non-existent in Vietnam (Topmiller, 2000). Consequently, there existed outright defiance, silent protest and the acquiescence in government dominance and state control over religion (Denny, 1994).

Today, Vietnamese Buddhist practice consists of various paths (Weigelt, 2011). There are distinctive preferences in Northern and Southern Vietnam. Northern and Central Vietnam

adopted the Mahayana school of Buddhism (with emphasis on social justice and paths to the state of enlightenment) prevailing in China, Korea and Japan. The Southern part adopted Theravada Buddhism (fundamentalist and conservative, with more emphasis on monasticism and individual practice) prevailing in other countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Burma and Cambodia (Topmiller, 2000, p. 233). However, Buddhist activity has been increasing since the ‘*Đổi mới*’ in the 1990s in a socio-economic renovation process under socialist collectivism (Nguyen, 2009). *Đổi mới* is ‘subjectively experienced and publicly debated’ and ‘had sparked both desire for profit and suspicion of wealth as a threat to traditional Vietnamese morality’ (Leshkovich, 2006, p. 281, 307). Such concerns have led to an upsurge in spiritual practices and the need for the preservation of traditional cultural values in Vietnam (Kleinen, 1999; Luong, 1993; Malarney, 2003). Rapid socio-economic changes in Vietnam have brought about a feeling of unrest, powerlessness and obsession in people’s life, thus leading to the need for spiritual forces (Taylor, 2004) and a means of communication and exchange such as prayer, ritual or offering (Riesebrodt, 2007). Additional to that, even though Vietnam is a communist country that is supposed to reflect common ownership and distribution of property of wealth based on the ideology of ‘from everyone according to their skills, to everyone according to their needs’ (Black et al., 2012, p. 56), Vietnam’s ideology now appears to be corrupted and misguided.

There is also concern that powerful actors may politicise religion in the pursuit of their own agenda to institutionalise religious groups and power structures to strengthen the state (Dickhardt & Lauser, 2016, p. 10). For instance, there are spiritual journeys known as pilgrimages; however, these are not for spiritual development or transformation but for the search for spiritual support for merit-making and wealth creation. Some of those associated sacred places have been considered as projects in ‘reshaping Vietnamese Buddhism, forming identities, constructing national history and economic exploitation’ (Dickhardt & Lauser, 2016, p. 24). Therefore, the Vietnamese ruling party distinguishes between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ religion (Lauser, 2016) because religion has played the part of both reinforcing the state and rebelling against it (Soucy, 2003). The Vietnamese state is in control of religion, which can be described as ‘balanced tensions’ (Soucy, 2003, p. 126). A good religion is defined by the state as having legitimate beliefs (*tín ngưỡng*) and beautiful customs (*thuần phong mỹ tục*) (Endres, 2002, 2011), including cultural values, such as the veneration of ancestors (*thờ cúng tổ tiên*), Mother Goddesses of the Four Palaces (Đạo Mẫu Tứ Phủ), as national culture and

identity (*bản sắc văn hóa dân tộc*) (Lauser, 2008; Ngô, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006; Endres, 2011).

The lack of trust of the Vietnamese people in the regime (Vu & Gill, 2017), its ‘political gene pool’, and the need to express ‘freedom’ of opinion, speech, press, protest, and even religion (Abuza, 2002; Thayer, 2008), have fostered the need to seek personal freedom and mindfulness through spirituality. Moving into the twenty-first century, the Vietnamese witnessed the disadvantage of Confucianism as a remnant of Chinese rule with active elements within the regime resulting in backwardness (*lạc hậu*), feudalism (*phong kiến*), and superstition (*mê tín*) (Leshkovich, 2006, p. 298), compared to the Buddhist principles of flexibility and freedom. Therefore, Vietnamese Buddhism has become increasingly engaged in Vietnamese lives – diversified in social, economic and religious activities (Nguyen, 2009). The Vietnamese people have been witnessing the rise of a spiritual movement with engaged Buddhism as part of the country’s contemporary transition (Vu & Gill, 2017).

In Vietnam, besides the existence of superstitious spiritual rituals embedded within society, a rationalised secular form of Buddhism has emerged. In contrast to devotional forms of Buddhism, oriented at pragmatic and material needs within modern life, individual spiritual development has been encouraged, thus rejecting the idea of any help from gods and spirits (Dickhardt & Lauser, 2016, p. 7). Therefore, incorporating Buddhism in this study helps to explore the underlying assumptions shaping the Vietnamese context and managerial and leadership perceptions, orientations and behaviour in business amidst the complex mixture of both traditional and contemporary values.

In summary, Buddhism – as a practical guide for living along with its increased engagement in Vietnamese society in its complex contemporary milieu – is important to consider when examining and exploring leadership practices in Vietnam. As Buddhism has received little or no attention in the literature so far, it is timely for this study of spiritual leadership in Vietnamese organizations and the contribution of Buddhism to it.

4.1.3 Buddhist principles and concepts

Buddhism consists of various principles and practices. This section introduces a number of familiar and well-applied principles in the literature of organizational behaviour.

Impermanence, dependent arising and karma (cause–effect)

The Buddha places importance in his teaching on direct and real experience rather than a philosophy, therefore understanding nature is a crucial part of understanding Buddhism (van den Muyzenberg, 2014).

Impermanence (Pāli: *anicca*; Sanskrit: *anitya*)⁵ refers to the fact that everything changes over time. All phenomena in life are interacting and changing since nothing is permanent and the world is constantly moving through three stages: being born, abiding, and dying (Shen & Midgley, 2007). However, in reality, people are more in favour of stability, and they only like change if it is beneficial in the short-term (van den Muyzenberg, 2014).

Depending arising (Sanskrit: *Pratītyasamutpāda*; Pāli: *Paṭiccasamuppāda*)⁶ emphasises the reality that nothing can stand alone. Individuals, organizations and society are interdependent. However, this does not necessarily mean that people cannot make choices on their own, but rather should bear in mind the options in decision-making that could have an impact on themselves as well as on others (van den Muyzenberg, 2014).

Karma (cause–effect) (Sanskrit: *karman*; Pāli: *kamma*)⁷ is one of the basic principles in Buddhism. The law of Karma explains the cause-and-effect phenomenon and ‘depending arising’ of both human and non-human beings, creating a symbiotic relationship among all beings in promoting sustainability (James, 2004). Everything has a cause and a consequence behind it. Buddhists believe that people lack adequate knowledge in acknowledging the impact of their decisions and therefore more attention should be paid to decision-making to prevent problems arising when there are short-term purposes (Shen & Midgley, 2007).

The Four Noble Truth and the Noble Eightfold Path

According to Mendis (1993), Buddhism is not a religion and is not based on faith, but is more about reasoning and rational thinking. The Buddha experienced the Four Noble Truths (FNTs) through meditation techniques; however, it is appreciated by various Buddhist schools of thought (Mabsout, 2015), and is not something mystical or inaccessible

⁵ S. XXII, 15; Ud. IV, I.

⁶ Saṃyutta Nikāya [Saṃyutta 22, 87]; see Bodhi 2000, cited under Canonical Sources, Vol. 1, p. 102.

⁷ Karma and Rebirth, by Nyanatiloka Thera (Wheel 9); Survival and Karma in Buddhist Perspective, by K. N. Jayatilleke (Wheel 141/143); Kamma and its fruit (Wheel 221/224).

(Batchelor, 1997). The Four Noble Truths (Sanskrit: *catvāri āryasatyāni*; Pali: *cattāri ariyasaccāni*)⁸ illustrate suffering due to ignorance, inappropriate or excessive desires and greed. The Truths encourage ethical conduct by balancing material and spiritual well-being and moderating desires (Mendis, 1994). The FNTs are as follows:

- (1) Life is full of dissatisfaction, suffering and ending (*dukkha*) (Siderits, 2007).
- (2) Dissatisfaction is a result of desire or cravings (*tanha*) which can be transformed into the ‘three poisons’- greed, hatred, and delusions (Flanagan, 2011; Mendis, 1994). According to Siderits (2007), people normally think that their existence is indefinite and that they can achieve happiness just by pursuing conventional goals. In Buddhism, such interpretation reflects ignorance because it fails to acknowledge the principles of impermanence – everything is changing – and nirvana – suffering resulting in cravings and attachment.
- (3) Desire and suffering can be terminated by overcoming ignorance.
- (4) The Noble Eightfold Path is the solution to cure suffering (Metcalf & Gallagher, 2012).

The Noble Eightfold Path (Pali: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*; Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) aims at the liberation of suffering through knowledge and wisdom in perceiving things naturally – as they are. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of the following principles (Swierczek & Jousse, 2014):

- Right view – wisdom to comprehend the impermanent and imperfect nature of life
- Right intention – commitment to do good and be ethical
- Right speech – being truthful and positive
- Right action – being fair, honest and respectful in ethical conduct
- Right livelihood – living ethically without negative consequences
- Right effort – motivation towards right livelihood and ethical living
- Right mindfulness – ability to see the true nature of phenomena
- Right concentration – ongoing action and practice

All these principles can be practised within one’s capability (Essen, 2010) with no particular order, as they are interconnected and reinforce one another. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are the foundations for understanding Buddhist philosophy.

⁸ Mahāsatiṭṭhānasutta, DN Mahāvagga 9.400.

Non-attachment

The term ‘attachment’ in Western psychology has positive connotations in terms of secure attachment – a feeling of being loved and supported in life’s ventures (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and as a foundation for regulating individual emotion, stress and threats. However, in Buddhism ‘attachment’ refers to grasping and clinging, resulting in suffering (Wallace, 2005). In Buddhism, most suffering arises from attachments. For example, Gyatso (1984, p.5–6) identifies various forms of suffering from attachment. Attachment to pursuits such as appearance, fame, power, rewards and recognition in organizations can mislead people in ways that will harm them eventually. The things we are attached to can be sources of suffering. For example, moths are attracted to light from a light bulb, yet when they enter the lampshade or attach themselves to the light bulb, they die. Such attachment to the pursuit of something is likened to people being entrapped inside walls that prevent them from experiencing true freedom. From a Buddhist perspective, suffering arises if one possessively and passionately clings to things or other beings: they will experience an unwholesome form of attachment. If, however, a person is inclined towards things and beings but maintain inner freedom and love, they will experience wholesomeness (Govinda, 1991). From a Buddhist perspective, mental representations of the self or desirable objects – mental fixations – are incompatible with *depending arising* and the impermanent nature of reality. The release of mental fixations encourages a more objective perception, compassion and reduced selfishness that in turn alleviate suffering (Sahdra et al., 2010).

Compassion

In Buddhism, compassion (*karuṇā*)⁹ is one of the most well-known principles. Compassion is sustained and practical determination to do everything in one’s power to help others alleviate their pain or suffering (Dalai Lama, 1995; Rinpoche, 1992). Compassion is the core of what it means to be human (Himmelfarb, 2001): contributing to individual and social good (Blum, 1980; Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 1998; Wuthnow, 1991). ‘Empathy is the wellspring of a deep compassion and loving-kindness, toward oneself and others, and brings about a transformation in the character of the practitioner’ (Mamgain, 2010, p. 24). Compassion arises from the affective component of empathy in the way that it acts on alleviating others’ suffering (Birnie et al., 2010). Buddhist compassion is not just about the delivery of care

⁹ One of the four sublime or divine abodes, *brahma-vihāra*; The Practice of Loving Kindness, by Nānamoli Thera (Wheel 7), The Four Sublime States, by Nyanaponika Thera (Wheel 6), *Brahma Vihāra*, by Narada Thera.

(Dutton et al., 2002) or understanding in traumatic situations (Hutchins, 1990): it is a skilful approach based on wisdom (Schroeder, 2004). It reflects rational and contextual flexibility in addressing the pursuit of well-being for all sentient beings, without attachment to personal preferences or hidden agendas.

Non-self

Non-self (Pāli: *anattā*; Sanskrit: *anātman*)¹⁰ in Buddhist teachings refers to the ability to let go of the ego or self and the associated desires, which are fundamental causes of human suffering (Goleman, 2003). The Buddha taught this concept to encourage ‘a manner skilfully adapted to the needs of living beings, yet which betrays no trace of mental clinging’ (Pye, 2005, p. 109): ‘The teaching of non-self is advanced to bring down the determinate view of self, while if a determinate view of non-self were held, the declaration of self would be made to unfix it’ (Pye, 2005, p. 109). What this concept implies here is a non-attachment viewpoint – the capability to stay away from one’s own ego but at the same time not be reluctant in showing compassion.

Emptiness

Emptiness (Pāli: *suññatā*, Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*)¹¹ is also a fundamental Buddhist teaching, that phenomena, including the ‘self’, are ‘empty’ of intrinsic existence (Thich, 1999). Emptiness is associated with all existence (Garfield, 1994). It is not a mystical state of mind or a verbal technique but reflects the very nature and fabric of the reality which we are part of. It is a state of being, a way of life and a truth about existence (Van Gordon et al., 2016), yet it is one of the most poorly elucidated and understood Buddhist concepts (Shonin et al., 2015).

Emptiness in Buddhism represents the concept that nothing exists forever and ‘the notion of having a personal self with any fixity is an illusion’ (Schuyler, 2012, p. 6). Emptiness does not mean that nothing exists, but that things are subject to change. It is articulated based on understanding of impermanence and depending arising. Impermanence comprises three dimensions: the self, which will ultimately die and cease to be; phenomena, which are constantly changing; and the transiency of phenomena (the fact that phenomena are

¹⁰ Anatta-lakkhana Sutta, Vinaya I, 13–14; S. XXII, 59; tr. in Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha (Wheel 17); Alagaddupama Sutta; M. 22: tr. in Wheel 48/49.

¹¹ Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (XVIII: 8), (Garfield, 1995; Westerhoff, 2006).

constantly changing) – anything resembling the self with intrinsic existence can never be located in time and space (Tsong-Kha-pa, 2004).

Buddhist perception on the levels of truth

The Buddhist perception of the levels of ‘truth’¹² consists of the ultimate truth (*paramattha - sacca, -vacana, -desanā*) – the concept of ‘life is empty’ through the enlightened eye – and the conventional truth (identical with *vohāra-sacca*) – the ‘common sense’ truth open to manipulation (Snelling, 1999). In other words, thinking that phenomena are real is a relative truth (Ray, 2002). It marks a departure from Western interpretations of how, in a relative way, a material mind is ‘embodied in a brain dependent on material causes and conditions’ compared to how Buddhism interprets the ultimate sense of mind as ‘empty of specific materiality [...] is the source of all there is’ (Schuyler, 2012, p. 6). As such, the Dharma or Buddhist teachings are just means articulated in specific contexts, which are empty in nature. The Buddha compared his teachings to the finger pointing to the moon. The moon represents the true mind and the finger represents the Dharma. If too much attention (or attachment) is paid to the finger, we might misunderstand our true mind. There is no specific finger of Dharma: everyone can point to the moon, which makes the Dharma itself empty. The two levels of truth can be considered as a vehicle for understanding Buddhist metaphysics and epistemology (Garfield, 1994).

The Middle Path

The Buddha experienced two forms of extremism that lead to suffering: greed for material wealth and self-mortification (self-torment or over-asceticism) in an extreme belief that if the body is tormented enough, the soul can be free and liberated (Mendis, 1994). The Buddha referred to this as painful, unworthy and unprofitable, and his experience led to a more profound, higher wisdom named the Middle Path (Davids, 1969). In Buddhism, the Middle Path (Way) (Pāli: *Majjhimāpaṭipadā*; Sanskrit: *Madhyamāpratipad*) reflects a moderate way based on the principles of cause-and-effect, depending arising, and ‘profundity relation’ (Vallabh & Singhal, 2014).

The Buddha teaches the Middle Way to avoid extremes of self-mortification and indulgence (Schroeder, 2004, p. 13). This also ‘avoids the extremes of nihilism (which says that all

¹² D.9 S.I.25; Jayatilleke (1963, p. 361ff).

entities are non-existent in reality) and eternalism (which says that some or all entities in reality have existence independent of conditions)’ (Burton, 2001, p. 182). The Middle Way is a morally appropriate response to a given situation. It gives ‘full moral weight to conflicting “pro-life” and “pro-choice” values, accepting the demands of both but acknowledging that any practical resolution of the dilemma will entail that one of the conflicting moral claims will perforce lose’ (Perrett, 2000, p. 110). Based on the Noble Eightfold Path, the Middle Way is about moderation and balance and acknowledging limits (Payutto, 1994). Various scholars have used this term as an economic term to present moderate consumption, which could lead to sustainability (Schumacher, 1973; Kolm 1985, Zsolnai, 2011).

The Flower Garland Sutra

The Flower Garland Sutra (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*)¹³ introduces ten stages of self-development towards enlightenment, with ten corresponding qualities (*pāramitās*). Among these, only six *pāramitās* have been well documented and applied in scholarly conversation and organizational studies (Rinpoche, 2003; Schuyler, 2007), and the rest remain controversial and are considered hardly achievable qualities, since one has to undergo and practise the six *pāramitās* first to be able to get to the seventh stage. These qualities, Mitchell (2002) states, are as follows:

Generosity (Dāna) – the practice of giving to those who are misfortunate and poor to show compassion, and giving to those who are better off to offer the three jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha – the awakened one; the Dharma – the teaching; and Sangha – the community.

Virtuous conduct (Śīla) – commitment to do good and harmless things to others. Virtuous conduct is crucial for individuals to practise the basic teachings of Buddhism, which can furnish one with mindfulness and consciousness (Dalai Lama, 1995).

Forbearance (Kṣānti) – training oneself in patience and compassion in the face of aggression or difficult times.

Diligence (Virya) – the practice of *pāramitās*, without being blocked by laziness, to reinforce the experience.

Meditative concentration (Dhyāna) – training the mind to achieve mental stability so that the knowledge or wisdom can be achieved.

¹³ Madhyamakavatara (translation and commentary by Mipham, 2002).

Wisdom (Prajña) – the realization of the ultimate truth, which is the realization of the unity, or non-duality, of all things.

Skillful means (Upāya Kausalya) – an important stage in perfection in practising Buddhism. By skillful means, one has the ability to adapt Buddhist teachings to benefit different people (Mitchell, 2002).

Aspiration (Pranidhāna) – determination of the practitioner to attain full Buddhahood.

Power (Bala) – spiritual power allows the bodhisattva to use various means to teach Dharma (Mitchell, 2002).

Exalted wisdom (Buddhahood) (Jñāna) – the realization of a fully awakened being, a Buddha. When the bodhisattva reaches this level of attainment, exalted wisdom completes all other pāramitās.

Wisdom

Wisdom (Sanskrit: *Prajñā*; Pāli: *Paññā*) is the antidote to ignorance in mistaken views of reality (Tideman, 2016), a mindful state preventing attachment to individuals' own perceptions (Dutton et al., 2014). Wisdom is 'the correct understanding of how the phenomenological world exists and operates, namely as an interconnected system' (Tideman, 2016, p. 197). Wisdom rejects the independent state of the self from others and nature (Loizzo, 2006; Wallace, 1993), preventing people from placing their hopes and fears in an illusory sense of the self that can lead to an endless cycle of suffering, known as samsara. Wisdom liberates people from samsara towards the state of nirvana¹⁴ (Khyentse, 1993; Wallace, 1993).

4.1.4 Buddhist skilful means

In the previous section, *skilful means* was introduced as one of the stages in attaining the state of enlightenment while practising Buddhism. In this section, the meaning of skilful means is presented in more detail, with a particular focus on how it is a useful yet little explored concept in the literature in general and in organizational studies in particular. Further discussion will also consider why this study would benefit from incorporating this particular concept in exploring leadership and CSR practices in the contemporary context of Vietnam.

¹⁴ Nirvana represents realization of the ultimate truth, without which freedom from the bondage of suffering is not possible.

Skillful means is a distinctive technique that the Buddha used to deliver his teachings. Skillful means assumes that no single teaching or practice is sufficient to cover the various karmic differences in the world (Schroeder, 2004). It does not limit any knowledge or means to attain knowledge. Skillful means is more about how knowledge is taught rather than about the content of teaching itself.

The Buddha demonstrated the Dharma in a variety of karmic reasoning, with a variety of choices of words, and a wealth of skillful means towards the path of enlightenment (Kern, 1989; Lindtner, 1986). For instance, for some, advice was offered; others received philosophical explanations of reality or reprimands; and there are occasions when the Buddha himself just kept silent about his teachings about truth because of the contextual needs of his audience (Schroeder, 2004). In Buddhism there are different paths to enlightenment, each representing different meditation techniques or disciplines; however, people become attached to particular ones, which is limiting. The Buddha's intention was therefore to teach non-attachment through skillful means. Pye (2005) states that the same Buddhist doctrine can be either a barrier or a door, depending how it is practised; and the effectiveness and value of any content in the doctrines do not conflict with how the Buddhist Dharma plays itself out in people's lives. As such, skillful means yields a context-sensitive approach to respond to concerns about contemporary issues and challenges of leadership and the complexities of contexts and to promote the concept of contextualization, which are relevant to the objectives and nature of this study.

However, there are also conflicting views on skillful means. The Lotus Sūtra (*Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*) illustrated how the Buddha himself sometimes manipulated the truth at various karmic levels or withheld it when people were not spiritually prepared to receive it (Schroeder, 2011). In the Mahāyāna Sūtras, some doctrines describe the Buddha's compassion for a murderer and for those who were about to be murdered even against his own moral principles (Tatz, 1994). The Buddha was willing to suffer as a way of showing his own way of empathy, the urge to do something helpful for others. Schroeder (2004) claims that suffering is a personal experience: no two people suffer in the same way and there is no general rule. It is the Buddha's way to respond to the unique karma of a human being.

There is a story in the Lotus Sūtra about a man who persuades his children who were resistant to his words to come out of a burning house by promising beautiful gifts (Kern, 1989, p. 94). The house reflects ignorance, outside of the house represents enlightenment, and the imaginary beautiful gifts are the Buddha's skilful means. From a Western viewpoint, Garner (1993) suggests that, to avoid any misinterpretation, the Buddha should have simply talked about the truth. Others claim that the Buddha's approach was illogical, without reasoning, reflecting conceptual dualities towards personal identity, consciousness or language (Murti, 1955; Conze, 1973; Suzuki, 1956; Robinson, 1967; Stcherbatsky, 1968). On the other hand, Schroeder (2004) claims that Western approaches to Buddhism have strictly put Buddhism into a framework that is in conflict with the flexibility that skillful means represents. The debates about skilful means and the Buddha's intentions resemble the rising concerns about using spirituality as an instrument and the inauthentic leadership styles evident in the contemporary organizational context. Further research unpacking the underlying assumptions of skilful means and the adaptation of skilful means in the leadership and organizational context would be useful.

Within the Buddhist literature, there are various views on the Buddha's teachings. However, Nagajuna's¹⁵ view of emptiness in Buddhist teachings and the Buddha's metaphorical comparison of his own teaching to 'the raft' serve a common purpose: to 'ferry sentient beings across the turbulent river of suffering' (Schroeder, 2011, p. 37) without future encumbrance. Buddhist teachings are skilful means of delivering a message of no fixed view, no attachment to any particular Buddhist teaching in respect to all contexts. Even when Nagarjuna referred to his philosophy of 'emptiness' in overcoming suffering, he claimed that his own perception of emptiness is also empty; whilst Western interpretations consider it a fixed remedy that applies to all under all circumstances (Murti, 1955; Streng, 1967; Garfield, 1995). Skilful means is about how wisdom is embodied in how one responds to others and applies Buddhist teachings rather than about a conception of the universe (Schroeder, 2004): Those who 'do not know the thought or the inclinations of others are not able to teach the Dharma to anyone' (Thurman, 1986, p. 29).

Skilful means as a technique and a way of interpretation is relevant and applicable in organizational workplaces. Leadership and management skills today require more flexibility,

¹⁵ An Indian Buddhist Mahayana philosopher, who developed the doctrine of emptiness.

contextualization, understanding and knowledge to cope with contextual challenges. Skilful means responds well to those needs. Different individuals with different backgrounds, beliefs and perceptions will consider different things as suffering or meaningful and this requires skilfulness to identify. Skilful means as a way of using Buddhist wisdom without clinging to any specific principle or rigid orientation is a challenge in today's diverse organizational workplaces.

4.1.5 Implications of Buddhist principles for organizational studies

This section outlines implications of Buddhist principles for organizational studies, how they have been applied, what studies have been done so far, and how they can be further explored in organizational studies.

4.1.5.1 Buddhist principles for understanding economics

Schumacher (1973) is one of the earliest Buddhist economists who proposed that a core Buddhist value in economics lies in its simplicity and non-violence in aiming at reduced consumption and more compassion towards sentient creatures. Buddhist economics scholars apply Buddhist principles variously to examining economics from a Buddhist perspective (Kolm, 1985; Payutto, 1994; Schumacher, 1973; Welford, 2006). For instance, Kolm (1985, 140–242) developed a model combining consumption and meditation, using meditation to reduce the desire for consumption, based on the principle of the Middle Path, whereby ‘the marginal productivity of labour involved in producing consumption is equal to the marginal efficacy of the meditation involved in economising on consumption without altering satisfaction’. Welford (2006) used the Four Noble Truths to highlight that suffering occurs because of rising levels of expectations and decreased levels of satisfaction in life. This then morphs into the counterproductive perception that purchasing goods will ease dissatisfaction; this is despite the idea that sustainability is an answer for liberating suffering.

Relating to the Four Noble Truths, Payutto (1994) considers economics in terms of two different desires: *Taṇhā* – unwholesome desires rooted in greediness and selfishness – and *chanda* – a more wholesome desire that aims at the well-being of sentient beings. He emphasises that economic activities of consumption and production are not ends in themselves but can also be means to promote social well-being. Other scholars incorporate a

compassionate view in economics. For example, Zsolnai (2011) claims that Buddhism is closely related to economics as it is not merely a religion but represents progressive social change by promoting the need to simplify desires to bring benefits for the society as a whole. The following table (Table 2.3) summarises the key studies incorporating Buddhism and economics, highlighting the applicability of Buddhist principles in contemporary studies.

Table 4. 1 *Applied Buddhist Principles in Buddhist Economics*

Buddhist Economist	Contributions to Buddhist Economics
Schumacher (1973)	‘Small is beautiful’: towards moderate consumption based on the Buddhist principle of the Middle Path
Kolm (1985)	Model of consumption and meditation based on the Buddhist principle of the Middle Path
Pryor (1991)	Buddhist radiation theory – collective virtuous actions for social and economy movement from individuals’ virtuous knowledge and action following the moral law
Payutto (1994)	Buddhist economics drawing from the Buddhist principles of desires: Tanha and Chanda
Inoue (1997)	Buddhist economics drawing from the principles of Zen Buddhism
Welford (2006)	Buddhist economics for sustainability drawing from the Buddhist principles of The Four Noble Truths
Puntasen (2007)	Buddhist economics drawing from the Buddhist principle of Sukha – happiness
Zsolnai (2011)	Buddhist economics with ethical principles and economic transformation based on Buddhist philosophy

4.1.5.2 Buddhist principles for desire and happiness

According to Welford (2006), human beings can be trapped by greed or avarice and constant dissatisfaction. However, trying to satisfy desires is not the answer to ending suffering (Grof, 1998); if people cannot reach their expected goals, they will fall into continuous dissatisfaction. On the other hand, if people succeed in achieving their goals, new expectations may appear, so they may still not feel fully satisfied. For example, if people at work receive rewards and praise that they seek, it is often the case that they would expect a promotion. They would experience suffering if it does not occur and, if it does, only transient

satisfaction. They then set their sights on the next promotion, and the process is repeated. This illustrates how the concept of non-attachment in Buddhism is useful: excessive or unrealistic attachment brings suffering.

In Buddhism, overcoming ignorance and desires can lead to happiness. Happiness in Buddhism does not require anything more than the necessities to maintain life (Puntasen, 2007). With less concern for desires, less preoccupation with satisfying desires, one can experience peace of mind and happiness. The Buddhist view of desire is very different and contradictory compared to Maslow's (1943) well-known Western 'hierarchy of needs' theory. Maslow's pyramid represents levels with naturally successive needs, whereby managers can identify employees' current stages to motivate them accordingly. If people have achieved their needs at one level, their needs tend to move to the next one until they reach the highest level of self-actualisation in fulfilling their potential. Self-transcendence has been added to the theory, with the highest needs and goals stated as altruism and spirituality (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). This contradicts the Buddhist philosophy of minimising desires to achieve a state of happiness. In Buddhism, people do not have to be at the highest level of Maslow's theory to achieve happiness. The Buddhist perspective is an alternative way of looking at motivation. Motivating people in organizations is not just about satisfying needs. People can be self-motivated if they understand the consequences of desires and attachment from the Four Noble Truths and do not have extreme attachments. This creates room for further research into the Buddhist concept of non-attachment in the way it plays out in organizational and leadership practices.

4.1.5.3 Buddhist principles concerning wealth and social responsibility

Buddhist economists perceive wealth from the viewpoint of the Middle Path. Wealth alone is not evil, as long as its accumulation is non-harming, because organizations cannot contribute to society or serve people without having the means to do so (Welford, 2006). Money in particular and resources in general are needed for spiritual practices and they 'should be a means to the end, not an end in itself' (Gill, 2014, p. 141).

In Buddhism, the proper distribution of wealth is significant in eradicating poverty and basic physical suffering. If people are not provided with the means of satisfying basic needs such as hunger, distress results in outcomes such as poor health and disease, and consequential

ethical behaviour cannot be expected (Kovács, 2011). In Buddhism, it is the concept of Dāna (generosity) that promotes wealth distribution to eradicate suffering in society from those who have the means to give. If there is no such distribution or sharing, this reflects greed in privatising and accumulating wealth, which leads eventually to widespread suffering (Kovács, 2011). In addition, virtuous conduct is a further principle in Buddhism to ease suffering and social problems, entailing actions that do not harm either the doer or the receiver (Zsolnai, 2007).

Economic responsibility in Buddhism is crucial because it provides the means for further contribution to society. Without ethical responsibility and understanding the potential harm from desires and economic achievement, wealth and other economic outputs can be counterproductive. The Noble Eightfold Path and the Buddhist pāramitās correlate with legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in corporate social responsibility. If individuals or corporations have wealth but do not master the importance of fair distribution and giving, they may suffering from extreme, dysfunctional attachment. On the other hand, ‘right intention’, ‘right action’, ‘right effort’ or ‘right livelihood’ can hardly be achieved at a philanthropic level if there are no means to achieve or support those intentions. In Buddhism, there is no distinction between the importance of economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, but rather it focuses on a Middle Path approach.

It is evident that Buddhist principles have much to contribute to organizational studies in general. Its principles present distinctive ways of looking at social and organizational phenomena. Therefore, incorporating Buddhist principles in the contemporary milieu, especially in the transitional context of Vietnam, may reveal new practical managerial approaches for tackling contemporary challenges, contributing to interdisciplinary approaches in management studies. .

4.1.5.4 Buddhist systems thinking

There is evidence to support the idea that Buddhism and systems thinking are interconnected (Macy, 1991; Fenner, 1995; Midgley & Shen, 2007). Systems thinking is a way of understanding the complexity of economic, social and ecological systems based on interactive variables governed by forces or mechanisms (Holling, 2001; Maguire et al., 2006, 2011; Walker & Salt, 2006).

According to Shen and Midgley (2007), there are various Buddhist principles applicable to systems thinking. For instance, the concept of ‘depending arising’ is crucial to systems thinking. It supports Maturana and Varela’s (1992) view that there is no genuine objectivity but knowledge arises from particular perspectives, which relates to complexity theory – examining past and present environmental influences on present behaviour (Cilliers, 1998). Understanding depending arising, or interconnectedness, facilitates understanding of the dynamic system as a whole (Merali & Allen, 2011) and the improvement of industrial symbiosis (the use by one company by-products from another) (Tsvetkova & Gustafsson, 2012). In particular, this concept encourages a leadership orientation to sustainability (Metcalf & Benn, 2013) and the leadership ability to integrate and reconcile multiple conflicting goals (Boiral et al., 2014) and to identify complex systems dynamics so that necessary organizational changes can be adapted to quickly (Metcalf & Benn, 2012, 2013).

Fenner (1995), on the other hand, links systems thinking and Buddhism through the Middle Path – avoiding extremeness to avoid incomplete knowledge. This is similar to the systems cybernetic approach: any deviation to the right is corrected by a movement left and vice versa. Churchman’s (1970) view of getting rid of ignorance to improve society is also compatible with the implications of the FNTs. Finally, yet importantly, the Buddhist law of karma promotes systems theories of the need for sustainable living in reducing present levels of demand and energy consumption and pollution for the benefit of the future (Meadows et al., 1972, 1992, 2004).

According to Williams and colleagues (2017), understanding systems thinking is helpful for both conducting research in organizational studies and for developing leadership practices. For instance, organizational scholars may think about moving beyond just researching organizational resilience to considering socio-ecological resilience (Williams et al., 2017; Whiteman et al., 2004; Winn & Pogutz, 2013). Leadership practitioners may consider becoming systems thinkers, acknowledging the interdependencies between systems on which we depend on (Polman, 2014).

Examining Buddhism in this study therefore can provide an understanding of how Buddhist thinking shapes systems thinking in organizations, how Buddhist-enacted leaders articulate

their ways of thinking in the contemporary context to shape their leadership practices, and how and why some Buddhist principles are applied in leadership practices. The study responds to recent calls by Williams et al. (2017) for future research in this area.

4.1.5.5 Buddhism and economic sustainability

Daniels (2007) claims that suffering in the FNTs is associated with excessive greed, which can lead to over-reliance on economic growth, thus engendering large-scale production and the exploitation of natural and non-renewable resources, thereby causing environmental and social problems (Dake, 2010). The law of karma in Buddhism and the principle of depending arising suggest a cyclical view rather than a linear one (Abeydeera et al., 2016) in how the economy is associated with production and consumption in relation to society and the environment. Therefore, Sivaraksa (2011) asserts that prosperity is not merely about income and wealth; it involves ‘self-reliance, self-dignity, contentedness, generosity and mindfulness’ (p. 89). In fact, wealth creation is important; however, Buddhism promotes the means to do it ‘without harming people besides making a positive contribution to society’ (Muyzenberg, 2011, p. 176), reflecting the concept of Buddhist skilful means. From a Buddhist perspective, wealth creation needs to be based on selflessness and cooperation rather than on capitalist values of self-interest and competition (Puntasen, 2007). There are a number of studies incorporating Buddhist principles in promoting organizational practices for economic sustainability (Daniels, 2007; Fan, 2009; Lamberton, 2005; Muyzenberg, 2011; Prayukvong & Rees, 2010; Valliere, 2008) in exploring causality in organizations, in strategy formulation, production and investment in minimum-intervention production, acknowledgement of environmental and social costs, and establishing non-egocentric leadership and management practices.

In a more recent study, Daniels (2017) suggests that incorporating the Noble Eightfold Path guidelines and other principles such as karma and the FNTs in managerial practices in all nations of the Mekong Basin created significant Buddhist influences in their socio-cultural and political nature. Nations in the Mekong Basin will have great awareness over their sustainable economic activity and management. In the context of another Buddhist-influenced country, Sri Lanka, AMO – a multinational manufacturing organization – has been able to contribute to economic sustainability. It has been successful in ‘operating a successful business that contributes to the country’s gross domestic product, employing more than

70,000 employees, and supporting their dependents, contributing to the livelihood of indirect employees and establishing manufacturing plants in rural areas' (Wijethilake et al., 2017, p.11). Studies show that the enactment of Buddhism in CSR and sustainability practices have great impacts.

It is interesting, therefore, to see how the incorporation of Buddhism in leadership practices has an impact on long-term and short-term orientations, on leadership vision, and especially on how Buddhist-enacted leaders react to issues of materialism in Vietnamese society that are affecting organizational members and business management in general.

4.1.5.6 Buddhism and environmental sustainability

The Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path provides a remedy for the exploitation of natural resources, emphasising the value of moderation in making full use of them (Daniels, 2011; Schmithausen, 1997). In particular, the principle of 'right livelihood' in the Noble Eightfold Path ensures the well-being of humans and nature (Koizumi, 2010) by stressing 'earning one's living in ways that do not harm, deprive or exploit other people, animals and nature' (Daniels, 2007, p. 170). Additionally, principles of depending arising and karmic consequences also provide an understanding on the impact of human actions on environmental sustainability. Prayukvong and Rees (2010) claim that the individual has an impact on society and nature, and it is our ignorance and greed that fail to safeguard nature for their existence, thereby leading to environmental degradation (Paterson, 2006). Thus, understanding the FNTs would be beneficial in changing motives by minimising, moderating and managing production activities in a way that material and energy throughput and environmental exploitation and state changes are mitigated (Daniels, 2017). Nature itself is a valuable system where every single non-human species and ecosystem has its intrinsic value that begs for preservation and conservation efforts (James, 2004; Kala & Sharma, 2010; Paterson, 2006). Depending arising is a distinctive principle that allows connections of all three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental and social sustainability (Abeydeera et al., 2016). Therefore, organizational practices should promote more research on eco-efficiency means of reducing the pressure on the natural environment and practices, and promoting biodiversity, wildlife and ecosystems should be encouraged (Daniels, 2007; Fan, 2009; Prayukvong & Rees, 2010).

In responding to this, Daniels (2017) suggests that having a *kamma-vipāka* approach based on understanding the karmic consequences in the Mekong basin would encourage ‘research and development for cooperative international planning, assessment and strategic policy regarding water and other key environmental resource...to create effective and productive but less harmful and more gentle economic development’ (p. 59). In the case of Sri Lanka, for example, AMO’s environmental sustainability practices include both internal and external practices (Wijethilake et al., 2017) – external, such as working with schools, the community, conducting career development programmes, and internal, such as initiating eight work streams: energy, emissions, chemicals, water, waste, eco-products, culture and standards.

Further exploration of how Buddhist principles are enacted in leadership practices and how they influence leaders’ orientations to social responsibility issues including environmental sustainability is a topic of research that is worth investigating, especially in contexts like Vietnam where social responsibilities are considered a luxury amidst other social issues for a developing nation such as dilemmas in the need to increase standards of living and the pursuit of materialism for individual and private gain.

4.1.5.7 Buddhism and social sustainability

The ‘right livelihood’ in the Noble Eightfold Path illustrates how strongly Buddhism is linked to social responsibility. The ‘right livelihood’ is based on the five precepts of abstaining from killing, stealing, abusive sexual conduct, incorrect speech, and use of intoxicants highlighting how important it considers morality and ethics in its practice (Johansen & Gopalakrishna, 2006). The Buddhist principle of compassion also links to social sustainability in its notion of empathy (Abeydeera et al., 2016). Compassion encourages a healthy social relationship, preventing harm to others and helping people to be of service to others (Rinpoche, 2003). Compassion may embrace positive organizational outcomes such as altruistic love (Salzberg, 2006), respect, willingness for cooperation and teamwork (Marques, 2012), strengthening collaboration and harmony with stakeholders (Prayukvong & Rees, 2010), and non-violence and coexistence between humans and non-humans (Paterson, 2006). Applying Buddhist principles can promote initiatives compatible with labour law, work–life balance, skills development, career advancement, rewarding excellence, and other aspects of wages, health, safety and wellbeing (Wijethilake et al., 2017).

The karmic laws of Buddhism also provide a behavioural guide for how not to offend others by promoting compassion-based collectivism and strong moral maxims (Shrestha, 2017). The application of this principle facilitates unselfish behaviour to the benefit of the community as a whole (Carlo, 1982). This also promotes community welfare by preventing the loss of market incentives, inefficiencies, and the formation of corrupt and exploitive power elites (Hans-Dieter, 1973). However, in reality, a recent study by Shrestha (2017) of small firms in Nepal found that, although firm owners were aware of ethical norms and followed the Middle Path lifestyle in their consumption, these firm owners had a weak inclination to serve society by both supporting employees and conserving their natural and cultural heritage. This poses a question about theory versus practice in applying Buddhist principles, which it is useful to examine further in this study in the contemporary context of Vietnam.

4.1.5.8 Research in Buddhism and sustainability

Though there are strong relationships between Buddhism and sustainability, the topic has not been explored widely. The following table (Table 4.2) summarises the empirical studies that report concerns about Buddhism and sustainability.

Table 4. 2 *Empirical Studies on Buddhism and Sustainability*

Authors	Methodology	Sampling & Context	Findings
Chaisumritchoke, 2007	Case Study	Thailand Local pharmaceutical companies	Sufficient economic philosophy to tackle pharmaceutical industry problems based on three principles of moderation, rationality and self-immunity to changes and two conditions of wisdom and morality
Prayukvong & Rees, 2010	Multiple Case Studies Interviews and documentation	Thailand Multinational and small companies: Somboon Group, Merck, and PricewaterhouseCoopers	A threefold training cycle based on profound understanding of interconnectedness and environmental sustainability
Valliere, 2008	Case Study	Canada and Nepal Small companies	Right livelihood plays an important role in the evaluation and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities and in the day-to-day operations of resultant new businesses

Authors	Methodology	Sampling & Context	Findings
Parboteeah et al., 2009	Survey Method World Values Survey by face-to-face interviews	Non-profit sectors 40 nations around the world	Buddhism showed positive relationships with both internal (intrinsic, self-actualisation outcome) and external (material, conservative values) work values
Phillips & Aarons, 2005	Survey Method	Western Buddhist Study Centers in Australia	Spiritual engagement, social shaping and social homogeneity of Buddhist engagers
Marques, 2010	Phenomenology Snowball sampling	Eight Buddhist Masters, of which four were Western (U.S.-based) Masters, and four Eastern based, in Tibet and India. Three business leaders, of whom two were based in the U.S. and the third was located in Dharamsala, India.	Strengths for using Buddhist practices in the workplace: pro-scientific, greater personal responsibility, and healthy detachment, re-educating the world of business, and enhancing personal ownership and a healthier society Potential weaknesses for using Buddhist practice in the workplace: non-harming, equanimity, and no competition
Lamberton, 2005	Action Research Participative method of inquiry	An organization in which the primary researcher is a voluntary worker	With a sustainable sufficiency framework, the organization would be transformed but not necessarily enlarged Transformation no longer prioritises economic outcomes over social and ecological ones Its sustainable development framework is absent from its sustainable sufficiency framework
Fernando & Jackson (2006)	Grounded Theory	Sri Lankan business leaders	Positive relationship between Buddhist precepts and leaders' decision making
Wijethilake et al. (2017)	Qualitative Research Interviews	Sri Lankan sustainability managers of manufacturing organizations	Positive response to institutional pressures for sustainability using acquiescence, compromise, avoidance defiance and manipulation strategies
Abeydeera et al. (2016)	Sustainability reports analysis	16 corporate sustainability reports from sustainability award-winning operations in Sri Lanka	Sustainability reporting is highly institutionalised and there is a disconnect between Buddhism as a prevalent institutional force in the local culture and corporate representations in reporting

Most studies show positive relationships between Buddhist principles and sustainability. However, few introduce applicable and practical leadership and managerial practices adopted

from Buddhist principles to promote sustainability practices. Therefore, further exploration of whether Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in the context of Vietnam incorporate sustainable orientations and, if so, how leaders are influenced by Buddhist principles to initiate such orientation and why may be stimulated by this study and may contribute to Vietnam's societal development.

4.1.5.9 Corporate mindfulness and mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective

Mindfulness has become an increasingly popular topic in organizational studies recently, mainly because empirical studies suggest that the adaptation of mindfulness practices at the organizational level leads to positive outcomes such as improving lives (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012; Halliwell, 2014), managing unexpected events based on anticipation and resilience (Rerup, 2005; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006); and coping with psychological and cognitive stress (Wajcman & Rose, 2011).

Most popularly, mindfulness practice in the Western literature is addressed largely as a stress-reduction technique (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, Purser & Loy, 2013; Purser & Loy, 2015). Particularly, the secular Western forms of mindfulness practices are based on popular Buddhist preferred texts of Western teachers as stress-reduction techniques, which are far different from the original Buddhist canonical descriptions (Bodhi, 2011; Gethin, 2011; Purser & Millilo, 2015; Thānissaro, 2012). In fact, transferring forms of mindfulness practices from an individual level to the corporate level, while failing to position and conceptualize mindfulness practices adequately, is problematic (Vu & Gill, 2018). There are various forms and practices of mindfulness that need to be acknowledged and interpreted appropriately in its original Buddhist worldview to avoid misconceptualizations and misinterpretations of the concept of practice of mindfulness (Kudesia & Nyima, 2015).

In Buddhism, mindfulness (Pāli: *sati*; Sanskrit: *smṛti*) is articulated and achieved through various states and not just mindfulness (Brown & Ryann, 2003). An important Buddhist practice is to articulate the state of mindfulness through wisdom, based on not just moment awareness but also on past experiences that have enhanced personal development (Anālayo, 2010, Gethin, 2001; Purser & Milillo, 2013; Thānissaro, 2012). The state of mindfulness is ethics-based mind training accumulated from the Noble Eightfold Path (Purser & Millilo, 2015; Vu & Gill, 2018). However, the application of mindfulness practices in organizations is

based on a secular interpretation and application that has been co-opted and commodified (Purser & Loy, 2013). Such application focuses on stress-reduction for organizational ends, such as increasing productivity, which conflicts with the ethics-based mind-training purposes of Buddhist mindfulness in exchange for the pursuit of organizational greed and desires, which eventually can lead to suffering.

In the earlier preliminary quantitative phase of the study, ‘inner life’, in Fry’s spiritual leadership model referring to mindfulness, appeared as a weak predictor in the model in the context of Vietnam. Therefore, it will be useful to explore whether Buddhist-enacted leaders introduced mindfulness practices in their organizations and, if yes, how they were introduced and what forms of mindfulness practices were involved. Were they merely stress-reduction techniques or did they consist of various forms of mindfulness practices, including wisdom-based practices? Exploring these issues can help to examine the validity of the ‘inner life’ construct in Fry’s spiritual leadership model and to shed light in the exploration of the application of Buddhist interpretations of mindfulness practices at the organizational level in response to the increasing criticisms of secular interpretations of corporate mindfulness practices in organizations. The following section reviews what the literature has covered so far in incorporating Buddhism in leadership studies and identifies remaining gaps in the field.

4.2 Leadership and Buddhism

There are various Buddhist lessons and principles applicable to leadership practices today (Case, 2013). This section of the study presents approaches taken to incorporate Buddhism and leadership in scholarly conversations and research and highlights why further exploration of leadership from a Buddhist perspective would benefit leadership studies in general and leadership development practices in particular.

4.2.1 Research approaches incorporating Buddhism and leadership

There are both a number of conceptual studies (Dalai Lama & Muijenberg, 2008; Kovács, 2014; Kriger & Seng, 2005; Muijenberg, 2014; Premanode, 2009; Tideman, 2016; Swierczek & Jousse, 2014; Vallabh & Singhai, 2014; Vu & Gill, 2018; Wijithadhamma, 2017) and a few empirical studies (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Fernando, 2007; Fernando et al., 2009; Schuyler, 2012) that examine leadership from a Buddhist perspective.

A number of publications refer to the Buddhism concept of ‘non-self’ in leadership practice (Kovács, 2014; Kriger & Seng, 2005; Gray & Kriger, 2005; Swierczek & Jousse, 2014). Kriger and Seng (2005) claim that leaders should not put importance on the ‘self’ and ‘ego’ as these lead to desires and attempts in trying to satisfy them and cause suffering. This does not mean the denial of the self but rather that it is part of the interconnectedness of the world with ‘endless causal networks’ (Kriger & Seng, p. 783). On the other hand, Vu and Gill (2018) argue that it is important to ‘let go of extremeness’ in leadership approaches, including excessive attachment to the self to promote reflexive and contextually sensitive leadership.

The concept of non-self rejects the comparing mind in terms of inferior and superior relationships. Gray and Kriger (2005) state that, in Buddhism, there is no distinction between leaders and followers, which is similar (though not identical) to the Western concepts of distributed and multiple leadership (Gronn, 2002, p. 429) – allowing opportunities for all organizational members to exercise leadership in some way at some time. The Buddha denied the existence of a ‘self’ (DN22; SN 22,59; Conze, 1997) in the sense that the self itself is an illusion and leaders can only experience peace of mind without being attached to it (Swierczek & Jousse, 2014). Such an approach, according to Kovács (2014), can transform management and leadership into selfless service with a non-harming character who contributes to the realization of sustainability at different levels. Leaders are people who exercise their talents, knowledge, skills and competencies to manage situations on behalf of a group of people or organization (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2010; Quinn, 1996, Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The concept of ‘non-self’ establishes a fresh and open mind for both leaders and followers to react to various contexts flexibly with an open ‘don’t-know mind’ (Seung, 1976).

The Noble Eightfold Path and the FNTs have also been included in scholarly discussions in developing leadership practices. Wijithadhamma (2017) suggests that these two basic Buddhist teachings facilitate a combination of self-reflection, compassion and wisdom to avoid over-reaction to daily challenges, which are temporary setbacks. Swierczek and Jousse (2014) highlight that the Buddhist perspective on leadership is based on the principles of Rajadhamma, developed from the right view and right conduct of the Noble Eightfold Path to

promote enlightened leadership that is dynamic and based on the balance of ongoing practice of compassion and equanimity. Right mindfulness also encourages holistic problem solving to manage unexpected and catastrophic mistakes through self-reflection and wisdom (Kovács, 2014; Nandram & Borden, 2011).

Karma has also been a topic of interest in leadership scholarship. According to the law of karma, results of actions might not ‘ripen’ immediately and no one can escape from the consequences of karma (Rinpoche, 1993). Therefore, wise decision making in consideration of karmic consequences encourages leaders to stay away from the idea of ‘stealing’ reputation, expertise or material goods (Dalai Lama, 1982), and especially ‘stealing’ from future generations (Schumacher, 1973) since speed, efficiency and low cost are not sustainable ways of expressing and implementing business interests. Karma promotes sustainable and responsible leadership practices needed both in Western contexts suffering from corporate scandals, managerial misconduct, and low levels of trust in business (Edelman, 2012; Kaptein, 2008) and in non-Western contexts plagued by greed, unethical business practices and corruption scandals (Choi & Aguilera, 2009). A recent study by Witt and Stahl (2016) emphasises that leaders’ fundamental assumptions about the deeper purposes behind their actions significantly affect responsible leadership practices, which further demonstrates how important the notion of karma is in developing responsible, ethical and sustainable leadership practices.

Compassion is another important aspect of leadership. Compassionate leaders can skilfully handle ‘suffering’ caused by workplace-related issues, such as hostile interactions, work-related problems, disrupted personal lives and problems brought to work, emotional pain and and workplace sabotage (Frost et al., 2000). Research has shown that, in the painful experiences associated with layoffs and downsizing, compassion tends to have a positive effect in influencing the perceptions and feelings of individuals (Cameron, 1994; Gittel & Cameron, 2003; Wanburg et al., 1999). According to Simpson (2014), compassion is crucial for leaders because leadership without compassion can lead to arrogance and power without wisdom can be exploitative and self-serving. Leadership from a Buddhist perspective thus appreciates love, compassion, joy and equanimity (Kriger & Seng, 2005).

Impermanence, *non-attachment* and *depending arising* are also helpful principles in guiding leadership practices. Impermanence encourages leaders to reduce attachments and cravings as they are sources of suffering. Reality itself is transient and impermanent, which can produce neither lasting happiness that we hope for nor pain that we fear (Khyentse, 1993; Wallace, 1993). Impermanence fosters the acceptance of phenomena without inherent worth or meaning (Baer, 2003) and avoids the tendency to be subjectively attached to positive feelings, therefore deliberately rejecting the negative and ignoring neutral feelings (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Impermanence helps to overcome defensive behaviour (Muyzenberg, 2014), such as when it relates to considering criticism. The latter can be helpful in testing leaders' ability to stay calm and accept opportunities to learn and develop their skills. Non-attachment to detrimental feelings like anger can also avoid the negative harming of others unnecessarily or negative side effects that could surface later (Thich, 2002).

Depending arising, on the other hand, facilitates leaders' understanding of organizations and their moderating of personal/organizational pursuits for the best results for the organization as a whole (Dalai Lama & Muyzenberg, 2008). In addressing individuals' notions of self-interest (Muyzenberg, 2011), depending arising promotes qualities of an 'integral leader' (Vallabh & Singhai, 2014) – making decisions based on various inter-relations. These include the individual, organization, society and environment being balanced with intentional, behavioural, cultural and social dimensions (Volckmann, 2005). Furthermore, Tideman (2016) observes that, with respect to Gross National Happiness (GNH), leadership is explicitly rooted in the principle of depending arising (interconnectedness), which can serve as a model in leadership that deals with complex interconnected challenges.

In examining Bhutan's GNH, Tideman (2016) found that the *six perfections* of generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom are attributes that a sustainability leader needs in creating societal happiness and well-being and that these can be regarded as the basis for both theoretical and practical enhancement of sustainability leadership. Qualities of generosity and ethics foster leaders' attractiveness to people as followers; effort, patience, concentration and wisdom assist leaders in dealing with dilemmas through more effective leadership (Tideman, 2016). Such qualities would also respond to sustainability leadership that requires exceptional qualities in the complex challenges involved (Metcalf & Benn, 2013).

In responding to leadership challenges, especially leadership dilemmas, Swierczek and Jousse (2014) propose the *Middle Path* for leadership approaches focusing on sufficiency and a middle path between the extremes of eternalism and nihilationism (Vallabh & Singhai, 2014). The Middle Path does not represent a ‘half-hearted’ effort but a combined vigorous, sincere external action and internal attitude of serenity and willingness to accept outcomes (Vallabh & Singhai, 2014, p. 765).

Vu and Gill (2018) recently introduced the concept of Buddhist *skilful means* and the notion of *non-attachment* in spiritual leadership to encourage the letting go of self-indulgent attachment to specific leadership practices. Such an approach thus promotes ethical and reflexive practice in spiritual leadership in response to the impermanent contemporary and challenging organizational contexts. They also emphasise that the concept of skilful means is also helpful for followers since leaders are not free agents in terms of institutional, cultural, structural and other contextual constraints, and that, therefore, skilful means can support collaborative agency within organizations to foster a healthy, ethical and compassionate working environment.

In reviewing the scholarly research introducing Buddhist principles into leadership – besides some well-attended concepts presented above – there are principles that have been little explored, such as skilful means, emptiness, or the notion of non-attachment in leader-follower relationships. Interestingly, most Western studies on leader-follower relationships are based on the notion of secure attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), whereas such an approach in the Buddhist interpretation may lead to suffering based on the level of attachment. Therefore, scholars call for more flexible and adaptive leadership styles in today’s contemporary, complex and challenging situations (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010; Bligh, 2016; Braun et al., 2016), and studies exploring interdisciplinary perspectives (Linstead et al., 2014) as well as Asian leadership models. Vu and Gill (2018) suggest that further examination of Buddhist skilful means and the Buddhist theory of emptiness may respond to an ever-growing quest for effective contemporary leadership practices.

2.5.2 Applying Buddhism to leadership practices

There are no agreed upon definitions and understandings of leadership and boundaries of the construct space (Bass, 1997; Chemers, 1997; Gill, 2011, p. 2–10). Most leadership and

management theories have been developed in Western culture (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2004). Many of the leadership practices in the literature come from North American studies (Bryman, 2004). In reality, by 2004, 80% of the world's population was located in developing countries (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2004). Bass (1990) calls for a revisiting of leadership research to recognise different cultures and countries and to reflect social realities. Exploring leadership practices and styles in an Eastern context would contribute both to the literature on leadership in general and in expanding scholarly research on Asian leadership models in particular.

People bring their values and attitudes that shape their behaviour to workplaces (Olsen & Zanna, 1993). Values reflect the core moral principles of individuals and tend to remain stable over time and impact on both attitudes and behaviour (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Individuals' moral principles and what they perceive as good or bad are determined by a set of core values, and these underlie the ethical systems of organizations (Fry, 2005). For example, across cultures and religions, honesty is regarded universally as a desirable value (Elm, 2003; Smith, 1992). Therefore, values are important for leadership practices. A leader who appreciates honesty, compassion and integrity has very different attitudes and behaviours towards followers compared to those who prize personal ambition or egoistic satisfaction (Hughes, Ginnet, & Curphy, 1999; Walsh, 1997). Exploring leadership from a Buddhist perspective thus may reveal applicable Buddhist traits, qualities and values for leadership practice, considering that the Buddha himself was a skilled, multilingual, active and effective leader who established the Sangha organization of monks (Case, 2013).

Though many Westerners consider Buddhist practitioners as passive and quiet people, Buddhism is very active in practice, requiring mental and behavioural effort, compassion, wisdom, study and meditation (Atkinson & Duncan, 2013, p. 8). Marques (2012) further highlights that Buddhist values in the workplace are psychological and ethical rather than religious. What the Buddha taught 2,500 years ago is still applicable to business today. Steve Jobs' entrepreneurial success with Apple is a practical example of applying Buddhist values in leadership (Foo, 2012a, 2012b).

In summary, there are a number of reasons why Buddhist principles are relevant to leadership practices:

- (1) Buddhism is not merely or at all a religion; it is a philosophy that is well appreciated in not only Eastern countries but also Western ones.
- (2) The Buddha himself was an exceptionally successful leader, whose influence is highly recognised across cultures.
- (3) Buddhist principles and causal relationships are based on consideration of the universe and reality, which provides practical insights and explanations regarding real phenomena.
- (4) At the heart of Buddhism is compassion, which addresses issues effectively such as ethical concerns, corporate social responsibility and sustainability.
- (5) Buddhist non-attachment praises flexibility that fits well in today's contemporary business environment in responding to complex issues and ethical dilemmas.

In understanding reality through the practice of Buddhist principles, leaders can develop a balancing state of 'heart & mind' that enriches their capability for practical systems thinking and their personal values and virtues. Even effective leadership can sometimes have a dark side because 'too much of a good thing can be a bad thing' (Gill, 2014, p. 145). Therefore, further research on the application of Buddhist principles, such as skilful means, emptiness and non-attachment, may enhance leadership contextualization and flexibility that enhance sense-making in practising compassionate and skilful leadership.

4.3 Research gaps and justification for the research

Based on the literature review, this section identifies the gaps within the literature of spiritual leadership, and applications of Buddhism in organizational studies and provides a justification for the theoretical and methodological approaches of this Vietnamese study.

4.3.1 Research gaps

Four major gaps in the literature have stimulated the pursuit of this research topic in this study.

- (1) Lack of a comprehensive application of Buddhist principles in organizational studies

Many scholars examining Buddhist principles in organizational and leadership studies have their own specific focus of interest on a particular concept, principle or path. Rarely has any comprehensive approach been taken to consider the application of Buddhist practices as a whole, which covers a wider range of Buddhist principles. Buddhist skilful means, the theory of emptiness and the concept of non-attachment have much to contribute and they challenge Western approaches to leadership; yet they have not received the attention they deserve.

(2) The deviation of Western and Eastern worldviews in interpretation and in doing research

Many concepts in the literature of organizational studies have been explored using a ‘colourised lens’ derived from research from a Western perspective rather than exploring phenomena in their own right. Eastern approaches, philosophies and cultural values, with their own unique characteristics and deep cultural norms and traditions, may offer distinctive organizational and leadership practices. Eastern concepts may create, contribute and enrich robust organizational management and behaviour practices across cultures and diverse contexts (Barkema, 2001; Tsui, 2007). Therefore, exploring spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003, 2005) in Vietnam would contribute to the contextualization of Western theory, allowing both Western and Eastern perspectives to blend when exploring phenomena. Thus, this would be useful to further examine the impact of institutional, social contexts and different interpretations of spirituality in Vietnam – an Eastern context compared to Western interpretations of spirituality reflected in Fry’s spiritual leadership model, which was built upon a Christian definition of spirituality.

This problem was highlighted in the preliminary quantitative phase of the study with hope/faith being a weak predictor in the spiritual leadership model. In addition, the deviation of Western and Eastern interpretations of some concepts like mindfulness is problematic. Therefore, exploring the underlying assumptions of how leaders in Vietnam initiate mindfulness practices through their leadership and the rationale behind those decisions will contribute to the understanding of mindfulness practice in organizations and it will allow comparison those practices with studies on mindfulness in Western contexts.

(3) Lack of Asian models of leadership

Most leadership theories and practices originate from Western scholars. There are limited studies exploring distinctive characteristics of leadership styles in Asia. *The Leadership Quarterly*, in its special issue (February 2015), presented Asian leadership models with a limited number of seven studies examining leadership styles in China, Singapore and India. Though studies are limited, the call in the special issue highlighted the ever-growing need to discover Asian models of leadership. This study investigating leadership in the context of Vietnam thus would contribute to such Asian models of leadership.

(4) Lack of a qualitative approach to spiritual leadership

A study of the literature suggests that a mono-quantitative method of exploring spiritual leadership is dominant. While this approach has been used in different countries (both Western and Eastern), its main limitation lies in the fact that has used a secular model without examining the impact of different cultural, religious and philosophical viewpoints in different settings. Fry developed a model using a Christian perspective in defining spirituality, which can be significantly different from Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish and Hindu perspectives.

Exploring spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective using a mixed-methods approach in the context of Vietnam, where there is a mix of Western and Eastern values and national identities, may therefore contribute significantly to both methodological approaches and studies of spiritual leadership. Moreover, the preliminary quantitative phase of this study suggest that the quantitative method alone could not deliver sufficient information to understand the spiritual, Buddhist-enacted nature of leadership of Vietnam and what role the complex transitional context of Vietnam played in forming its distinctive characteristics of spiritual leadership practices. On the other hand, issues of single-source bias, as highlighted by the preliminary quantitative phase of this study, suggest that the examination of spiritual leadership would benefit from exploration from multiple sources and from multiple perspectives to fully capture Buddhist enactment in shaping leadership vision and practices and its impact on organizational outcomes.

The context of Vietnam is particularly favourable for the purpose of this research. Studies on leadership in Vietnam are relatively humble, even though the country has experienced dramatic changes in terms of internal development and international integration, which may lead to interesting developing phenomena that are worthwhile to discuss and study. Hence, further examination of leadership in Vietnam would expand research on the above issues in a transitional economy.

Vietnam is a unique setting in terms of possessing distinctive spiritual practices and orientations while inheriting both Western and Eastern values. However, no research has been done on how these spiritual aspects may influence organizational workplaces and organizational and leadership practices. Therefore, exploring workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership in Vietnam is a timely and needed research area potentially contributing to theoretical and practical approaches to spirituality, workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership.

4.3.2 Justification of research

This mixed methods research, on exploring spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective in a Vietnamese context, aims to fill research gaps and respond to a number of contemporary concerns.

First, with a mixed methods approach consisting of both qualitative and quantitative varieties that explore both leaders' and employees' perspectives, the intent of this study is to develop a comprehensive and practical Buddhist-enacted leadership model based on dynamic application of Buddhist principles. Taking a multi-perspective view allows one to examine Buddhist-enacted leadership from different angles. For example, investigating leaders' perspectives allows one to discover what Buddhist principles leaders apply in their leadership, why they choose those principles, and how they incorporate Buddhist principles in leadership practices. Investigating employees' perspectives allows one to examine the effectiveness, instrumentality and authenticity of leadership practices incorporating Buddhist principles, and employees' receptiveness. This multi-perspective approach may also reveal inconsistencies in leader/follower interpretations, aspects that are surprising, and any 'dark side' of leadership in a transitional economy, which may have not been identified in mono-method approaches.

Second, the research intent of this study was to explore the nature of spirituality and the impact of spiritual orientations and engaged Buddhism in forming spiritual leadership practices and workplace spirituality in Vietnam. As such, leaders' vision, faith, hope, altruistic love, inner life, interpretations on creating membership and calling are examined from a Buddhist perspective. In the spiritual context of Vietnam, the study seeks to identify different perceptions (if any) compared to secular approaches in spiritual leadership practices in the West. The exploratory nature of the study may also reveal how spirituality is defined and perceived differently from a Buddhist perspective in Vietnam compared to the Christian perspective of spirituality adopted in spiritual leadership theory.

Therefore, in contextualising spiritual leadership theory, it is useful to discover cultural, social, contextual, spiritual, Buddhist and psychological aspects shaping leadership practices and their effectiveness in Vietnam – a transitional economy that is presenting both opportunities and challenges. The following chapter describes in detail the research approach, research design, research methods and data collection and analysis in contextualising the research and justifies the choices of those methods in exploring and examining spiritual leadership practices and its impact from a Buddhist perspective in the Vietnamese setting.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

This chapter introduces, explains and justifies the methodological choices and approaches of the study.

5.1 Research philosophy

A philosophical stance is an important foundation in establishing a research design and methodology. Research philosophy is about ‘examining the nature of knowledge itself, it comes into being and is transmitted through language’ (Patton, 2005, p. 92). Or in other words, it involves the ‘general ways of thinking about how the world works and how we gain knowledge about the world’ (Monette et al., 2013, p. 37). This section explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions in this study and its inquiry and research approach.

5.1.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm is an ‘accepted model or pattern’ (Kuhn, 1962, p. 23) of the nature of social phenomena and social structure. A paradigm serves to direct research from the objective and measurable reality in positivism through the ‘contextualised causal understanding’ of reality (Greene et al., 2001, p. 29) to the subjectivity of interpretivism to arrive at particular research methods (Feilzer, 2010). Research questions and methods reflect the researcher’s epistemological understanding of the world, while the interpretation of research findings reveals the researcher’s underlying philosophy: ‘all knowledge is knowledge from some point of view’ (Fishman, 1978, p. 531). However, a paradigm may also be constraining in preventing intellectual curiosity, creativity and sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), blinding researchers to certain aspects of social phenomena and theories (Kuhn, 1962).

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), research is a holistic approach that involves how philosophical assumptions can influence the choice of methodology and methods design and how outcomes with a certain methodology can have an effect retroactively on philosophical assumptions (Cua & Garret, 2008). Therefore, before any methodological considerations, reviewing ontological and epistemological assumptions is crucial (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Kanellis & Papadopoulos, 2009) because the quality and outcome of the

research is directly affected and influenced by how thoroughly the researcher has reviewed the philosophical considerations (Cua & Garret, 2008).

In social science, ontology and epistemology are the two fundamental areas of philosophical assumptions (Bryman, 2001). Ontology is the study of 'being' (Koepsell, 1999, p. 217), concerned with the nature of reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Saunders, 2011) and the nature of social entities (Bryman, 2001). Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned with the study of acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Bryman, 2001; Collins & Hussey, 2003; Saunders, 2011), and it looks at the origins and nature of human knowledge.

Within the ontological viewpoint in social science, objectivism assumes that social phenomena and social actors are separated, whilst constructivism or subjectivism claims that they are closely related (Bryman, 2001) because social phenomena and categories are constructed through social interactions and are in a constant state of revision (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Objectivism explores knowledge of the organization by mapping out the causal relationships among the elements of the structure and identifies the precise nature of laws and relationships among the social phenomena that are captured in social facts (Pugh & Hickson, 1976). Subjectivism assumes that the social world is nothing more than names, concepts and labels, which are subject to the interpretation of social actors (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Thus, to understand social phenomena, it is important to grasp the meaning and significance of the phenomena through an interpretative process to discover the motives, reasons and goals and logically explain causal relationships that lead people to act in the particular way that they do (Lee, 1992).

In making epistemological assumptions, there are two main positions: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2001). Positivism is based on the ontological assumptions of objectivity and the view that reality or the world exists beyond the human mind, independently of people's beliefs and perceptions (Hammersley, 2006; Maylor & Blackmon, 2005; Monette et al., 2013). As such, knowledge is only significant in this case if it is obtained and generated from objective techniques (Monette et al., 2013) to discover the natural laws and causal relationships of the world (Kanellis & Papadopoulos, 2009). Thus, the role of the researcher here tends to be a neutral one without the influence of cultural or social beliefs or experience from the past (Kanellis & Papadopoulos, 2009) and with a non-

judgemental detachment (David & Sutton, 2011). On the other hand, interpretivism considers that ‘the knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person’s lived experience’ (Weber, 2004, p. iv) and interpreted based on human perceptions and social interactions (Monette et al., 2013). Researchers who pursue the interpretivist approach respect diversity among different people (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Thus, they aim at acquiring deeper understanding, insights and interpretation of social phenomena from the various perspectives of social actors (Bryman, 2008; Saunders, 2011).

According to the literature, the positivist position is related more to quantitative methods and interpretivism is associated more with qualitative methods (Niglas, 2010; Bryman, 2008; Monette et al., 2013). Hence, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research lies in the epistemological foundations (Bryman, 2008). However, the link between paradigms and research methodology should not be oversimplified (Monette et al., 2013). In contemporary organizational studies, there is an ‘overlap and mutual influence between different traditions’ (Niglas, 2001, p. 2), and the ‘landscape of social scientific inquiry is continuously changing so that the paradigm system cannot be seen as fixed but as evolving through time’ (Niglas, 2001, p. 218).

In this study, there is an overlap in the associated paradigms and methods. In order to explore how leaders embody and enact Buddhist principles in their leadership practices as suggested by the main research question and the preliminary quantitative phase, there is a need for a qualitative approach in investigating the opinions, practices and assumptions of leaders who are practising Buddhism and a quantitative phase to examine the effectiveness of their leadership practices from employees’ perspective to get a multi-perspective view of spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam. Buddhist principles are rich in their variety and meaning; thus, it is hard to comprehend their meaning without detailed interpretation and explanation from practitioners. This reflects the position of interpretivism from epistemological assumptions and subjectivity from ontological assumptions. On the other hand, to examine whether such leadership practices adopted from Buddhist principles are effective or independent of what leaders believe or assume, this particular approach entails quantitative methods. Pragmatism is regarded an alternative paradigm, philosophically accepting that there are singular and multiple realities open to empirical inquiry to solve problems practically in the real world (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Rorty, 1999). Pragmatism

frees the researcher from mental and practical constraints created by ‘forced choice dichotomy between postpositivism and constructivism’ (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 27) and from being the ‘prisoner of a particular method or technique’ (Robson, 1993, p. 291). Pragmatism requires both objective and subjective inquiry to produce knowledge best reflects reality (Rorty, 1999). It claims that the world exists in different layers, some objective, some subjective, some both, with layers of ‘completeness, order, recurrences, which make possible prediction and control, and singularities, ambiguities, uncertain possibilities, processes going on to consequences as yet indeterminate’ (Dewey, 1925, p. 47). Pragmatism acknowledges the convergence of both quantitative and qualitative research: they share commonalities in their approaches to inquiry rather than being different at an epistemological and an ontological level (Hanson, 2008; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) because of political divisions among social scientists and the distinctive skill required for qualitative and quantitative methods (Jick, 1979; Morgan, 2007).

The philosophical assumptions underlying the research question and outcomes of the preliminary quantitative phase of this study suggest the choice of a mixed-methods approach in order to minimise bias and research limitations by employing and combining different methods and philosophical viewpoints. To explore the social phenomena underlying Buddhist-enacted leadership amidst the complex transitional context of Vietnam, the study is guided by a critical realist approach. Further explanation and justification are given in the following section.

5.1.2 A critical realist philosophical approach

The limitations of the preliminary quantitative phase suggest that there is a need to explore the context more deeply to understand how spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective is shaped in a transitional context with complex spiritual orientations through multiple sources and perspective. In particular, the social, institutional, cultural, spiritual and religious contexts in a high-context culture like Vietnam can deeply affect organizational life in general and the ways of thinking of both leaders and employees in particular. This informs a critical realist philosophical approach underlying this study.

Critical realism emerged out of the ‘paradigm wars’ of the 1980s (Denzim & Lincoln, 2011), combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches and a detailed account of their

ontology and epistemology for the formation of a comprehensive philosophy of science (Brown et al, 2002). More specifically, critical realism emerged from the work of Bhaskar during 1970s and 1980s, then further developed by Sayer (1992), Archer (1995), Collier (1994), and Lawson (1997). Critical realism sees the world as comprised of events, experiences, impressions, discourses, states of affairs, powers, and underlying structures that exist regardless of whether they are detected through experience or discourse (Patomaki & Wight, 2000). In other words, reality provides perceived phenomena and conditions for events, making experience possible.

According to Fletcher, critical realism ‘deviates from both positivism and constructivism’ because ‘ontology (i.e., what is real, the nature of reality) is not reducible to epistemology (i.e., our knowledge of reality), and ‘human knowledge [can only capture] a small part of a deeper and vaster reality (2017, p. 185). While positivism is critiqued for its ‘epistemic fallacy’ for the reduction of ontology to epistemology, the constructivist perspective is criticized for perceiving the reality or the construction of reality entirely based on the human knowledge and discourse (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 27). Therefore, critical realism acknowledges that we can access and understand the real social world through social science and reality (Danermark et al., 2002). However, Fletcher (2017) points out that ‘some knowledge can be closer to reality than other knowledge’; thus the world itself is ‘theory-laden’ but not ‘theory-determined’ (p. 185). Theories can guide researchers to get closer to reality, identifying ‘causal mechanisms driving social events, activities, or phenomena [...], using rational judgments of these social events (Archer et al., 1998, p. xi). As a result, critical realism is a useful tool to help a researcher to engage in deep explanation and causal analysis rather than relying on empirical description to analyze social problems and change and suggest solutions.

This approach is particularly useful to explore and examine Buddhist-enacted leadership in the context of Vietnam. In this study, it is not enough to understand how Buddhist principles or philosophy are applied in leadership, but helpful also to understand how and why the transitional context constructed engaged Buddhism in the society, and what it implies as a social or leadership phenomenon in Vietnam. As explained by Patomaki and Wight (2000), critical realism fosters a deeper explanation of a phenomenon, which itself can be a new phenomenon to be explained; thus knowledge is gained and revealed to help the researcher to revisit the original phenomenon.

Buddhism itself sees the world in its ‘depending origin’ forms, which may be reflected in how leaders’ form their relational psychology or how they see causal relationships in the real world to initiate their leadership vision or decision-making. Additionally, Buddhism emphasizes impermanence in its practice, which implies the ever-changing phenomena of the social world. These philosophical viewpoints of Buddhism partly align with the intent and nature of critical realism in seeing the world as comprising of objects and causal laws existing as ‘intransitive dimensions’ of the world (Patomaki & Wright, 2000). Therefore, applying a critical realist approach in this study helps to dive deep into the social context of Vietnam, the impacts of context and the underlying assumptions of bringing engaged Buddhism into leadership practices, and to critically examine these phenomena to reveal any other related phenomena.

In respect of leadership studies, Kempster and Parry claim that ‘critical realism can strengthen researchers’ confidence to place emphasis on an understanding and explanation of contextualized leadership as a scientific goal, rather than the scientific goal of generalization through empirical replication’ (2011, p. 106). Besides informing a multiple-perspective view of social phenomena through the triangulation of both positivist and constructivist philosophies in mixed methods, critical realism also informs a grounded theory approach for the qualitative phase of the study to explore the articulation of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices through thorough analysis based on researchers’ deep immersion into the context.

In summary, this approach provides ontological realism (the acknowledgment of a layered reality independent of the mind), epistemological relativism (beliefs are socially constructed and have potential fallibility) and judgmental rationalism – the possibility to justify the preference of one theory over the other (Patomaki & Wright, 2000) – which in this study refers to the utilization of Fry’s spiritual leadership as the foundation for exploring the research question of the study (see Chapter Three for more details).

5.1.3 Inquiry from the inside and the outside

In selecting a mode of inquiry in social research, it is essential for the researcher to create a fit between the nature of the problematic phenomenon under study and the researcher’s knowledge, skills, style and purpose (Evered & Louis, 1981). Kaplan (1964) identifies the

role of human values in organisations. Evered and Louis (1981) address the two paradigms of inquiry – from the outside and inquiry from the inside – to reflect how organizational researchers may adopt particular inquiry-guiding paradigms.

Inquiry from the inside and inquiry from the outside both serve different research purposes. Understanding an organization and its phenomena can be obtained in these two ways (Evered & Louis, 1981): studying from the outside entails data generated by the organization; studying it from the inside entails becoming part of the organization. Inquiry from the inside and inquiry from the outside correlates with Pfeffer's (1981) distinction between the two levels of organizational analysis: the level concerned with predictions of actions within an organization (by the outsider) and understanding how such actions are 'perceived, interpreted and legitimated' (by the insider) (p. 8). The two modes of inquiry have their own characteristics and they are different in various dimensions, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5. 1 *Differences Between Two Modes of Inquiry*

Dimensions of Difference	MODE OF INQUIRY	
	From the Outside	From the Inside
Researcher's relationship to setting	Detachment, neutrality	↔ 'Being there', immersion
Validation basis	Measurement and logic	↔ Experiential
Researcher's role	Onlooker	↔ Actor
Source of categories	A priori	↔ Interactively emergent
Aim of inquiry	Universality and generalisability	↔ Situational relevance
Type of knowledge acquired	Universal, nomothetic: theoria	↔ Particular, idiographic: praxis
Nature of data and meaning	Factual, context free	↔ Interpreted, contextually embedded

Source: Adapted from Evered and Louis (1981)

In contemporary organizational studies, the application of both types of inquiry is encouraged. Organizations are bodies of thoughts with sets of thinking practices (Weick,

1989). Researchers may prefer to be espoused to one or the other mode of inquiry. Anthropologists, for example, tend to use inquiry from the inside, whilst most research in the organizational sciences use inquiry from the outside (Evered & Louis, 1981). Both modes of inquiries have their own advantages as well as shortcomings that can be mitigated by combining them to secure their respective strengths and minimise their drawbacks (Evered & Louis, 1981): they are complementary. Inquiry from the inside can overcome shortcomings of research from the outside by looking at organizational features such as human actions in specific settings, human perception of the situation, human interest or motives, and the historical context of the situation, which otherwise may have been overlooked; inquiry from the outside can tackle the question of rigour and credibility of inquiry. Such a combined approach also reflects the proposition of Morey and Luthans (1984) in bringing *emic* (an insider's perspective) and *etic* (an outsider's perspective) analytical approaches together 'to merge the subjective–idiographic–qualitative–insider and the objective–nomothetic–quantitative–outsider approaches' (p. 29).

In this study, both modes of inquiry are applied for the purpose of the research. In order to gain insights on how and why certain Buddhist principles are adopted in leadership practices rather than others in the context under study, it is vital to have an inquiry from the inside to fully comprehend the context, the underlying assumptions and perceptions, and the meaning associated with each applied principle. Such an approach also reflects the emic perspective of cultural insiders to understand the native point of view (Morris et al., 1999) and to critically unpack Buddhist leadership practices in the context of Vietnam. However, whether such practices are effective or not and whether or not they can be generalised with leadership implications for practice, there is still a need for inquiry from the outside. The mode of inquiry from an etic perspective may be able to link cultural practices to external and antecedent factors that may not be salient cultural insiders (Harris, 1979) and to reveal what leadership practices are generally applicable to all organizations (Evered & Louis, 1981). Figure 5.1 elaborates the role of modes of inquiry in deconstructing the research questions for study.

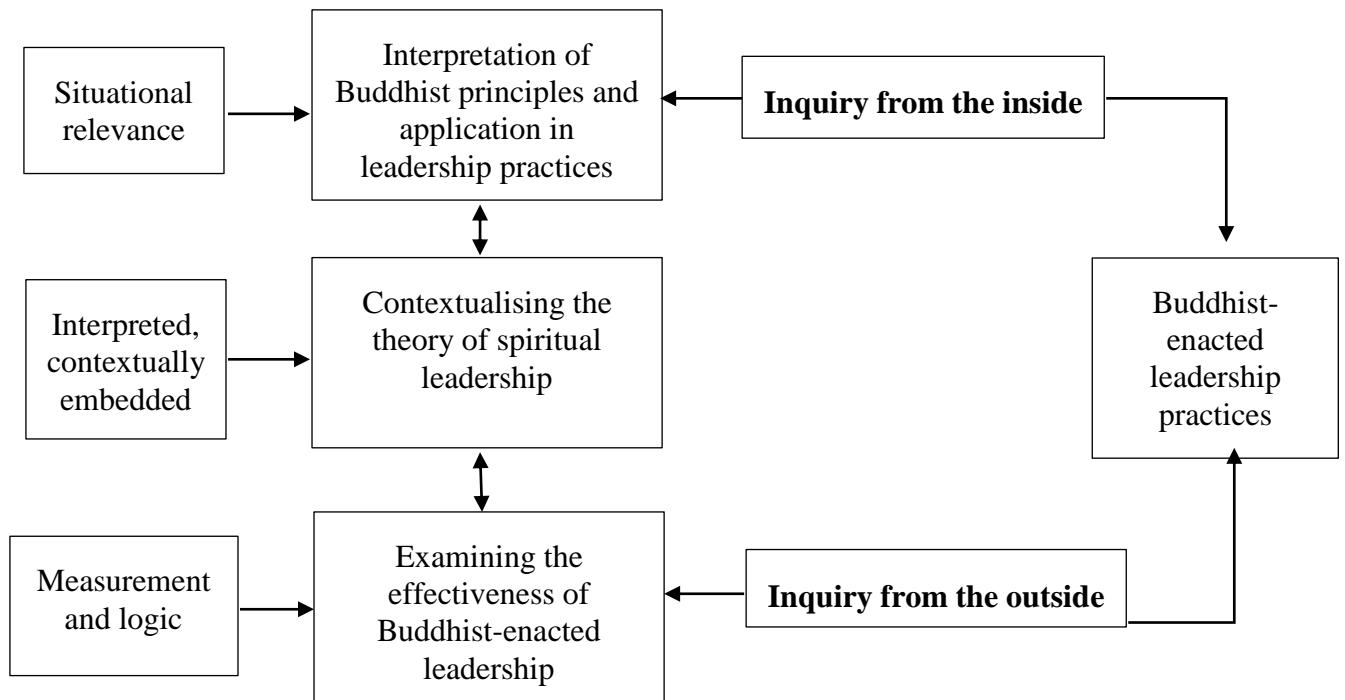


Figure 5. 1 *Research questions and modes of inquiry in the study.*

5.1.4 Research approach

On the basis of the ontological, epistemological assumptions and the modes of inquiry needed for this study, both deductive and inductive approaches were used in this study.

In organizational studies, researchers are encouraged to develop imaginative hypotheses in improving theorising (Locke et al., 2008; Weick, 1989) in a way that they both describe and explain the theory (Whetten, 1989) to avoid the lack of ‘theoretical tension’ (Weick, 1980, p. 179), idle speculation (Van Maanen et al., 2007), and sterile research on organizations (Weick, 1996). Merely describing in research is not good enough because it fails to generalise from theory due to the lack of scope and abstraction (Glaser, 2001) in explaining observed and recurrent findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Sutton & Staw, 1995). However, there is a dilemma in how to approach research with the two distinct processes of induction and deduction (Bourgeois, 1979; Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). There are different opinions on how theorists should start with their research by either generalising to apply to specific instances or to observe specific instances to generalise about the phenomena under study (Hyde, 2000). Induction (bottom-up) starts with observations of a set of phenomena to arrive at general conclusions based on a system for handling data (Samuels, 2000), while deduction (top-down) starts with general knowledge and then predicting specific observations (Bourgeois,

1979) through the use of system of logic (Samuels, 2000). In the top-down approach, the researcher may discover a problem in the literature in divergent perspectives on the same phenomenon to create a solution to that particular problem (Shepherd & Sutcliffe, 2011). Thus, such an approach involves the re-examination of assumptions that have been taken for granted in the relevant literature (Krippendorff, 1984) to provide for divergent thinking (Cameron, 1986; Rothenberg, 1976) and the potential for generalisation (Dimaggio, 1995; Gergen, 1978). On the other hand, an inductive bottom-up approach allows theorising from raw data and letting the data ‘speak for itself’ without pursuing challenging questions or techniques (Glaser, 1992).

Nevertheless, both the inductive and deductive approaches have their drawbacks. While the deductive approach is claimed to be associated with sterile, debatable and less generalisable theories (Weick, 1996), the theories formulated from an inductive approach tend to be abstract and lacking in scope (Eisenhardt, 1991; Glaser, 2001; Sandelowsky, 1997). Additionally, deductive theorising may ‘settle for common sense hypotheses framed at low levels of abstraction’ (Thompson, 1956, p. 110), thus resulting in insufficiency in the ‘explanation of why the theory or approach leads to a new or unanswered theoretical question’ (Sutton & Staw, 1995, p. 373) and failing to connect to a broader scholarly conversation, with restricted contribution to theory (Shepherd & Sutcliffe, 2011). Inductive theorising alternatively may result in a limitation to speak to the audience (Glaser, 2001) because of the focus on specific data sets preventing a broader vision for theorising (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Hence, the researcher may miss constructs and important relationships describing and explaining the phenomenon, which might lead to accusations of hidden personal agenda in research (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1996) or the termination of theorising based on merely descriptive outcomes (Glaser, 2001; Morse, 1994; Sandelowski, 1997) and a list of variables (Merton, 1967; Sutton & Staw, 1995).

To avoid such dilemmas in research approach, scholars have suggested combining both inductive with deductive approaches and vice versa (Thompson, 1956; Weick, 1996). Charles Sanders Peirce (1955), the founder of ‘American pragmatism’, suggests a third alternative for theory development that involves both deductive and inductive reasoning – abductive reasoning. Huff (2008) and Van de Ven (2007) describe abductive reasoning as starting with observation with a problem or situation, then deducing general laws from the evidence with

the assumption that empirical observations are a representative sample from a larger population of similar phenomena and refining the description by further testing or modelling. The abductive approach is more about the objective of the researcher in discovering new variables or relationships (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The distinction of abductive approach lies in its articulation from doubt (Locke et al., 2008) and the importance of the reality, field and context under study (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). 'Deduction proves that something must be; induction shows that something actually is operative; abduction merely suggests that something may be' (Peirce, 1931–1958, p. 171). Therefore, abduction is the generation of ideas, the examination of discovery (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, Czarniawska, 1999; Hansen, 2007; Van de Ven, 2007; Weick, 2005). It is more about 'speculation [...], assessment of plausibility rather than to a search among known rules to see which one might best fit the facts' (Weick, 2005, p. 433). As such, the motive to seek 'the unanticipated and unexpected' (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007, p. 1266) is generated from doubt – the interruption of continuance and habitual ways of understanding and acting (Locke et al., 2008).

Abduction has two sides to the coin: it is highly permissive (Paavola, 2004) and at the same time it is a source of inventiveness (Locke et al., 2008). According to Locke et al. (2008), doubt is abduction's engine in theorising in embracing the unknown, allowing space to ask the 'so what' question and to raise questions in the coding process rather than resolving them. This highlights the 'temporal character of theorizing' (Locke et al., 2008, p. 916), which correlates with the systematic combination approach of abduction of Dubois and Gadde (2002) in appreciating the context and empirical world under study in a nonlinear process to match theory and reality. Researchers are encouraged to explore the multiple meanings that can arise from the concept to avoid the blind side of missing the important features or indiscrimination of data collection and overload (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this study, an inductive approach is taken first to explore how leaders adopt and enact Buddhist principles in their leadership practices based on a grounded-theory approach. The data collected in this stage is then categorised and generalised into themes and concepts in relation to the literature and theory for contextualisation. Second, leadership characteristics from a Buddhist perspective in the context of Vietnam are examined using a deductive

approach to verify the effectiveness of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in organizations. Third, an abductive approach is taken to combine both empirical data from the inductive and deductive approaches for critical reflection with regard to the research question and to propose effective leadership practices as well as directions for future research. Such an approach can create ‘fruitful cross-fertilisation where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality’ (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559). Figure 3.2 illustrates the research approach.

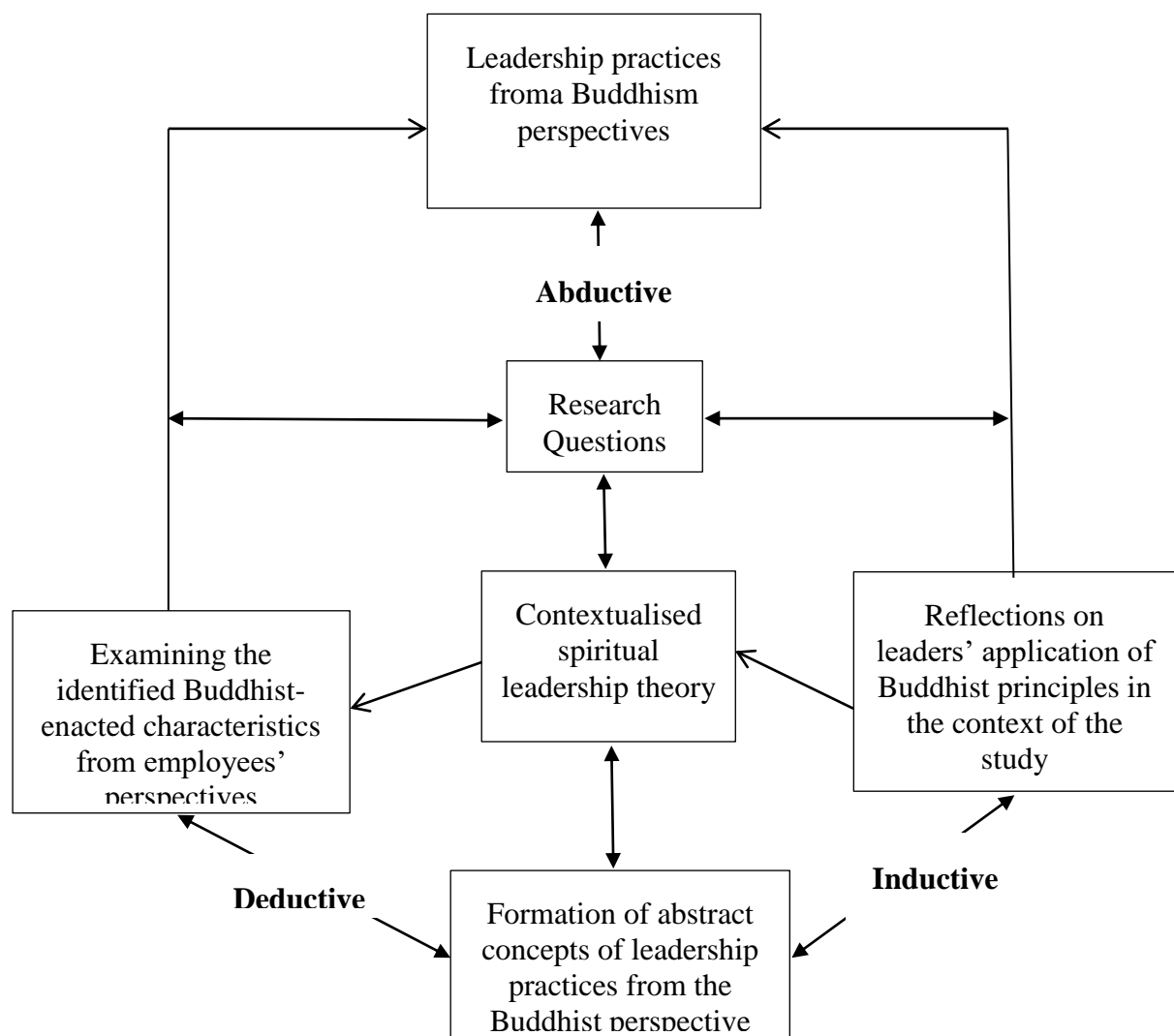


Figure 5. 2. *Research approach of the study.*

5.2 Research design

This section discusses research on leadership in organizational scholarship and justifies the research design for this particular study and its context.

5.2.1 Research on leadership

Leadership has been ‘colonising’ various fields of social research as part of the ideology of ‘leaderism’ (O’Reilly & Reed, 2012) – a widespread phenomenon that could mean almost anything to anybody, according to Alvesson and Spicer (2012). Alvesson and Spicer (2012) have illustrated three sets of paradigmatic assumptions in the study of leadership: functionalist, interpretive and critical.

Functionalism considers that leadership is an objective phenomenon and exists ‘out there’ in the world, grounded in systems functioning and survival (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), and can be unpacked by appropriate analytical tools (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Ontologically, leadership is assumed to be independent in a web of causal relationships; epistemologically, it is value-free in the rigorous application of methods (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Functionalist studies involve the investigation of leadership behaviour and traits (House & Aditya, 1997), the context and situation of leadership (Fiedler, 1967), the ability to transform vision and followership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011; Sashkin, 2004), and the role of leader followership (Bligh, 2011; Hollander, 1992). However, such an approach is claimed to be a failed one in generating general acceptance and scientific knowledge (Sashkin & Garland, 1979) due to lack of empirical support (Yukl, 1989). Thus the functionalist approach is questioned as a blinded perspective overlooking both the local meaning of leadership in different contexts and by different actors (Kelly, 2008; Meindl et al., 1985) and the dynamic process of leadership (Wood, 2005), thereby reducing leadership merely to measurement.

Interpretive assumptions of leadership, on the other hand, reckon it to be a socially constructed phenomenon (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). This approach invites qualitative methods like ethnography, case studies, and linguistic analysis to understand its complex nature (Bryman, 2004; Fairhurst, 2007). From an ontological stance, leadership is constructed through ongoing, subjective understanding; and epistemologically, it can only be examined through interpretive studies to discover its various facets and its associated ambiguities and

uncertainties to arrive at a shared meaning (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). The interpretive approach can be found in studies exploring how leaders influence frames, meanings and cognition in a process whereby individuals try to frame and define the reality of others (Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Fairhurst & Grant, 2005; Ladkin, 2010; Sandberg & Targama, 2007). Leadership emerges from superior-subordinate interactions (Wood, 2005). Leadership is also interpreted based on understanding the language and actions of leaders (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). However, there are drawbacks to interpretive studies because researchers find it difficult to explain why one person is in a more conducive position for leadership than others are due to non-discursive aspects such as economics, culture and social capital (Spillane et al., 2003).

There is a third paradigm for leadership studies – critical assumptions (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012; Calás & Smircich, 1991; Collinson, 2005, 2011; Ford et al., 2008; Harding et al., 2011; Knights & Willmott, 1992; Western, 2008). This responds to the shortcomings of the familiar traditional paradigms in leadership studies and looks at the meaning of leadership in different contexts (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Leadership is studied reflexively, reflecting on how the leadership phenomenon is formed by the researcher and the method, staying away from optimising leadership to gain and advance knowledge of the dark side of leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Leaders are important but are not the only authorities in the organisation. However, attempts to resist the authority of leadership may paradoxically foster our dependence on them (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Sennett, 1980).

The history of leadership has long been occupied by quantitative research as the most popular and commonly used method. The trends in quantitative leadership approaches involve confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modelling, multiple levels analysis and determining causal relations among variables using experimental studies (Stentz et al., 2012). Quantitative research on leadership is diverse and can address a wide range of research questions; yet it is more about an input–output model and directed at the impact of leadership rather than how leaders behave (Bryman, 2004). It seems that the preferable instrument in leadership studies tends to be self-administered questionnaires in experimental, cross-sectional and longitudinal designs and contexts (Bryman, 2004).

Research on leadership today involves greater methodological diversity than in the past (Bryman, 2004). Leadership research has attracted qualitative methods from 1980s onwards as an interpretative strategy for organizational symbolism and sense-making (Bryman, 2004). Qualitative research is utilised to explore nascent theories (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), with open-ended and flexible orientations towards novel settings (Bryman, 2004); to capture emergent forms of leadership such as e-leadership (Brown & Gioia, 2002); ethical leadership (Treviño et al., 2003); environmental leadership (Dyck, 1994); and spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). Qualitative research also tends to be effective in identifying how leaders manage meaning and symbolism (Bryman, 2004).

Campbell (1974) and Cronbach (1975) were the first to call for both qualitative and quantitative methods for experimental studies, extending beyond simply just numbers and words. Combining both approaches in mixed methods can maximise the strength of each approach, making up for the weaknesses of a single method alone, using one form to build upon the results of the other, and understanding contextual factors, cultural influences and multi-level perspectives (Creswell et al., 2011; Greene et al., 1989; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). According to Stentz et al. (2012), quantitative approaches (survey, correlational studies, experiments) can help the researcher to analyse existing theories, and the qualitative method (content analysis, case study, grounded theory) to support new discoveries and surprises in research and contribute to existing leadership theories. Mixed methods provide the ability to answer broader and a more complete range of research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, mixed methods in leadership studies have been increasing (Amabile et al., 2004; Anderson et al., 2008; Berson & Avolio, 2004; Blasé, 1993; Blase & Roberts, 1994; Coleman, 2000; Clark & Greatbatch, 2011; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; De Hoogh et al., 2005; Egri & Herman, 2000; Fry et al., 2005; Kirby et al., 1992; Martin et al., 2003; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Norman et al., 2010; Rosener, 1990; Sagie et al., 2002; Shamir & Lapidot, 2003; Shamir et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 2011; Trevelyan, 2001; Trichas & Schyns, 2012; Voelck, 2003). Mixed methods can be applied to even the oldest theory of leadership, trait theory (Anderson et al., 2008; De Hoogh et al., 2005), and conducted in a variety of different cultures (Amabile et al., 2004; Fry et al., 2005; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Norman et al., 2010).

Many new phenomena do not appear in quantitative studies; therefore, there is a need for developing and designing qualitative research and handling qualitative data to look at leadership studies rigorously and to examine their validity.

5.2.2 Research on spiritual leadership theory

Compared to traditional and even other contemporary leadership theories, the theory of spiritual leadership is in its nascent stage. Spiritual leadership has received widespread recognition as a focus for assessing and developing the relationship between leaders, followers and organizational outcomes (Hunsaker, 2016).

To date, Fry's spiritual leadership model and measurement approach are the most tested and developed (Fry, 2003, 2005, 2008). Empirical studies of Fry's spiritual leadership have been conducted in various contexts, both in the West (Fry et al., 2011, 2017; Fry & Yang, 2017) and in the East: China and Taiwan (Chen & Yang, 2012; Chen et al., 2012), South Korea (Hunsaker, 2016), Turkey (Ayranci & Semercioz, 2011), Pakistan (Bodia & Ali, 2012), and Iran (Javanmard, 2012). However, very little contextualisation has been carried out. Hunsaker (2016) explored spiritual leadership in relation to Confucian values and he produced a Confucian scale adopted from Ryu's (2007) Korean Confucian Values Survey with Confucian values as a mediator rather than contextualising the constructs of the spiritual leadership theory. Therefore, more robust investigations on the relationship of spiritual leadership and organizational outcomes tested in diverse contexts are needed (Benefiel et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2013; Pawar, 2009).

Other than Fry's measurement, Kolodinsky and colleagues (2008) used Wheat's (1991) human spirituality scale; Hall and colleagues (2012) adopted Mahoney et al.'s (2005) measures of striving attributes; Rego et al. (2008) used Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) measurement instruments of spirituality at work, and Milliman and colleagues' (2003) focused on Portugal. Ming-Chia (2012) and Petchsawang and Duchon (2012) developed their own measures. However, Fry's spiritual leadership measurement is the most applied and tested. This study also adopts Fry's (2016) measurement approach (Appendix G) to examine the relationship of Buddhist-enacted leadership and organizational outcomes.

5.2.3 Critical realism and leadership studies

Critical realism is an approach that is helpful in explaining leadership phenomena. Our understanding of leadership practices is constructed by humans (Dachler & Hosking, 1995; Meindl, 1995) and it is a real social phenomenon manifested, created and sustained by humans, even though we may not be aware of it (Fleetwood, 2004; Kempster & Parry, 2011). Leadership is constructed based on causal powers that can be transitive or intransitive and obvious or less obvious, and can generate similar or different effects in various contexts (Kempster & Parry, 2011).

At a local level of analysis, there might be similar leadership characteristics across contexts; however, ‘good critical realist-informed science would necessitate a deeper understanding and explanation of how they are similar’ and ‘seeks generalization through theoretical comparison’ (Kempster & Parry, 2011, p. 107). Therefore, critical realism is useful to deeply investigate the context shaping or influencing leadership practices since the social context of leadership is manifested by complex causal interactions of structures and agency such as leader behaviour, leader transformation and the structure-consideration dichotomy (Fleetwood, 2004; Kempster, & Parry, 2011).

Critical realism sits well with this particular leadership study for a number of reasons. First, the transitional context of Vietnam is a complex setting that needs research orientations that resonate with its reality. Critical realism acknowledges that, while our understanding of reality is fundamentally socially constructed, this understanding is limited by modality of language, and this is especially the case in investigating the nature and impact of spirituality. There might therefore be certain realities or truths, Sayer (1992) says, that we may never be able to discover in an absolute sense. This fact guides this study in pursuing a deeper immersion than the currently limited studies of leadership in Vietnam and in highlighting potential further aspects to be explored in the country.

Second, a critical realist approach will also critically examine the transposing of spiritual leadership in a context embedded in engaged-Buddhism. As highlighted by Kempster and Parry (2011), there are challenges for researchers to immediately transposing a leadership theory in a different social and cultural context. As a result, for instance, we already see

studies of transformational leadership in a Confucian setting. And Fry's spiritual leadership theory reflects a Christian perspective of spirituality. Such theories reflect understanding of the actual and potential variations in the research context.

Third, leadership is a complex temporal phenomenon, which needs to be closely analysed. Consonant with what the notion of 'impermanent' in Buddhism implies leadership temporal: all enactments, causal relationships and practices shaping leadership are renegotiated or modified over time, impacting on the meaning of leadership (Archer, 1995). These temporal forms of leadership may even be strongly apparent in Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in Vietnam, with leaders practising the notion of impermanence in their leadership, especially when human agency is subject to change based on human actions (Dobson, 2002; Mingers, 2002). Critical realism can reveal these processual manifestations of leadership through in-depth investigations of the research setting in Vietnam.

The following section highlights the justification for mixed methods in this study and how critical realism guides this approach.

5.2.3 Justification for mixed methods

This study adopts a mixed methods approach in response to the research questions. There are a number of reasons to justify this choice.

Mixed Methods

Mixed methods research represents the third methodological movement, combining quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Creswell et al. (2008) define mixed methods as 'the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at once or more stages in the process of the research (p. 168).

What distinguishes mixed methods from other methods is its capability to inspect the phenomena or subject under study in a more complete and holistic manner to capture insights that might have been missed by the employment of a single method (Jick, 1979). A mixed methods approach is designed to reduce bias and validity issues (Blaikie, 1991) and to

overcome the weakness of a single method (Bryman, 2008). However, mixed methods do come with drawbacks. Mixing methods is not easy by all means: it is a complicated process in interrelating findings from the different methods (Bryman, 1992; Creswell, 1994; Jick, 1979) and it requires the researcher to have sufficient conceptual and theoretical knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Jick, 1979). There are also no rules for ending the research process, especially when following new leads may end in a lengthy research process (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2004). The mixed methods approach is also demanding because it may yield surprises, so the researcher needs to be ready and flexible in altering course, changing the methods, reconceptualising the research, and even starting over with the research questions.

Though there are certain challenges associated with mixed methods, for this specific study mixed methods appears to be a good fit. The following section aims to justify the choice of mixed methods.

This is based firstly on the preliminary quantitative study and the research question of this study. Exploring the application of Buddhist principles in research is a complex, context-based phenomenon that begs for mastery of interpretation of Buddhism's worldview(s) to reduce complexity, enhance understanding and bring truthfulness to actual practical outcomes, for example leadership practices. The aim for practical outcomes of the research questions also links to critical 'multiplism' (Cook, 1985): examining the research question from different perspectives and combining different methods. It is crucial to investigate the effectiveness of leadership studies not just from the viewpoints of the leaders but also from those of other players in the organization to respond critically to the research questions that have been developed through the method of problematisation.

The second justification for the mixed methods design lies in its rationale and purposes that fit well with the research objectives of this study. Mixed methods can illustrate how the application of Buddhist principles may affect the outcomes of leadership practices and vice versa, and whether and to what extent the Buddhist-embedded leadership practices are effective. Such an approach may also highlight the interrelationship and complementary aspects of Western and Eastern viewpoints, particularly in evaluating how well a Western theory can be applied in an Eastern context. Additionally, mixed methods in general and the

intended sequential approach in this specific study may offer an opportunity for the research questions to be more focused and precise as a result of the exploratory phase.

The third reason to adopt mixed methods in this study is based on key decisions on purpose, role and order in mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches, following the framework proposed by Hurmerinta-Peltomäki and Nummela (2004) that presents a better match and suitability compared to any other single methods. The *purpose* for using mixed methods in this study is topic-related. A topic-related purpose refers to situations where theoretical or empirical information is scattered or insufficient, thereby requiring the researcher to be acquainted with a phenomenon that is new or yet to be explored (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2004). Mixed methods acknowledge the social realities and interactions in the search for the truth (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which aligns well with the critical realist philosophical approach. In this study, the topic of spiritual leadership is a nascent theory, a newly emerged phenomenon that begs for further exploration. Furthermore, incorporating Buddhist principles in spiritual leadership appears not yet to have been investigated, with no empirical studies conducted in this particular field. Buddhist interpretation and practice in the East compared to the West are also significantly different. Being engaged in the field, observing and interacting with respondents in interviews and conducting participant observations will also enhance understanding of the phenomenon. This is particularly important to contextualise spiritual leadership in Vietnam.

Fourth, the choice for mixed methods also lies in the contribution of the *role* of each method in this study. The roles of different methods can be equally important, but in some cases, one method may dominate the other. In this study, the qualitative method plays a significant role. The qualitative approach helps one to explore the underlying and deep understanding of Buddhist applications in leadership to contextualise spiritual leadership and its consequences in the specific context of this study. It may also shape a critical viewpoint on the difference between Western and Eastern worldviews in academic scholarly conversations and research. The quantitative method in this study, on the other hand, is used to examine the effectiveness of Buddhist-enacted leadership in the context of Vietnam. Both methods therefore have their different and distinctive roles in addressing the research questions.

Fifth, the author's choice and use of mixed methods are also determined by the *order* in which the methods contribute in the research. Sequencing the qualitative method before the quantitative method meets the need to explore the phenomenon first before testing it, whilst sequencing quantitative method first before qualitative method meets the need to test the variables first and then gain deeper knowledge and understanding (Creswell et al., 2008). Implementing both methods concurrently, on the other hand, provides the opportunity to answer the research question from different perspectives through different methods of inquiry.

Lastly, a critical realist philosophical approach in this study also informs a mixed-methods approach to explore and examine the research question of the study to investigate the complexity of the transitional context of Vietnam, the application of Buddhist concepts in leadership and how they manifest leadership orientations. Critical realism places significance on deep immersion into context, which is crucial to reveal the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership and the valid picture of the processual formation of spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam. Therefore, critical realism informs a grounded theory approach for the qualitative phase of the study to develop an understanding and explanation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the Buddhist-enacted phenomenon in both the social and organizational context that best describes and corresponds to the local context of Vietnam.

The limitations of the preliminary quantitative phase, however, also suggest the exploration and examining of the research question from multiple perspectives. Therefore, while the main qualitative grounded-theory approach is used to explore Buddhist enactment in leadership practices in a transitional context, the quantitative phase is utilized to support the qualitative phase in examining the advantages and limitations of the Buddhist-enacted leadership practices identified in the qualitative phase.

This study starts with the qualitative method and then proceeds to the quantitative method. This is an exploratory design best suited for exploring a phenomenon, which in this case serves to test aspects of an emergent theory (Morgan, 1998). The study is based on a taxonomy-development model (Morgan, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) for conducting the qualitative phase, first to identify important variables and then to develop and

contextualise the emergent theory of spiritual leadership, and then using the quantitative phase to examine the effectiveness of the contextualized theory.

Applying mixed methods in this study also addresses the calls for the application of multiple research approaches in leadership studies that represent both objectivist and subjectivist views towards a better of understanding leadership as a complex phenomenon (Stentz et al., 2012).

Philosophical assumptions

Buddhist worldviews and principles differ significantly from Western worldviews, and even from other Eastern perspectives such as Confucian or Daoist ones. Therefore, exploring how realistic it is to apply Buddhism to business and leadership and business invites an interpretative approach. The interpretative approach also serves to contextualise the theory of spiritual leadership, illustrating the constructs in a Buddhist contextual language and verify the effectiveness of such practices (this reflects functionalism). It is important that critical and pragmatic perspectives are taken into consideration to see whether there is a fit between the theory and the context and how the exploration of new findings can address some concerns about the ‘dark side’ of spirituality and leadership. For such purposes, criticality and reflexivity in this study are significant. These approaches inform the use of mixed methods for this study to respond properly to the research objectives and research questions formed from preceding problematisation.

Theory

Concerns have been raised about the validity and application in diverse contexts of spiritual leadership theory because of its nascency (Benefiel et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2013; Pawar, 2009) and because nascent theories tend to require exploratory methods (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Therefore, to apply the theory in the specific context of Vietnam and make theoretical contributions, this study needs to explore the constructs embedded in the particular context and to critically reflect on them to identify the fit. Such an approach reflects the nascent nature of the theory as distinct from the approach that has been embraced in most spiritual leadership studies.

Context

Buddhism is context-specific rather than content-reliant. The power of Buddhism lies in the nature of its flexibility, which is one of the reasons why it is widely recognised in the West as well as the East. Thus, to examine how Buddhist principles are at play within leadership practices in organisations, interpreting how leaders practise them in a specific context is crucial. However, interpretation alone does not tell a convincing story if it is neither well received by various organisational members nor generalisable to best practices that can be applied widely, and thus an objective view of such interpretations is required. Mixed methods are therefore an appropriate choice. Figure 5.3 portrays the rationale for the choice of mixed methods.

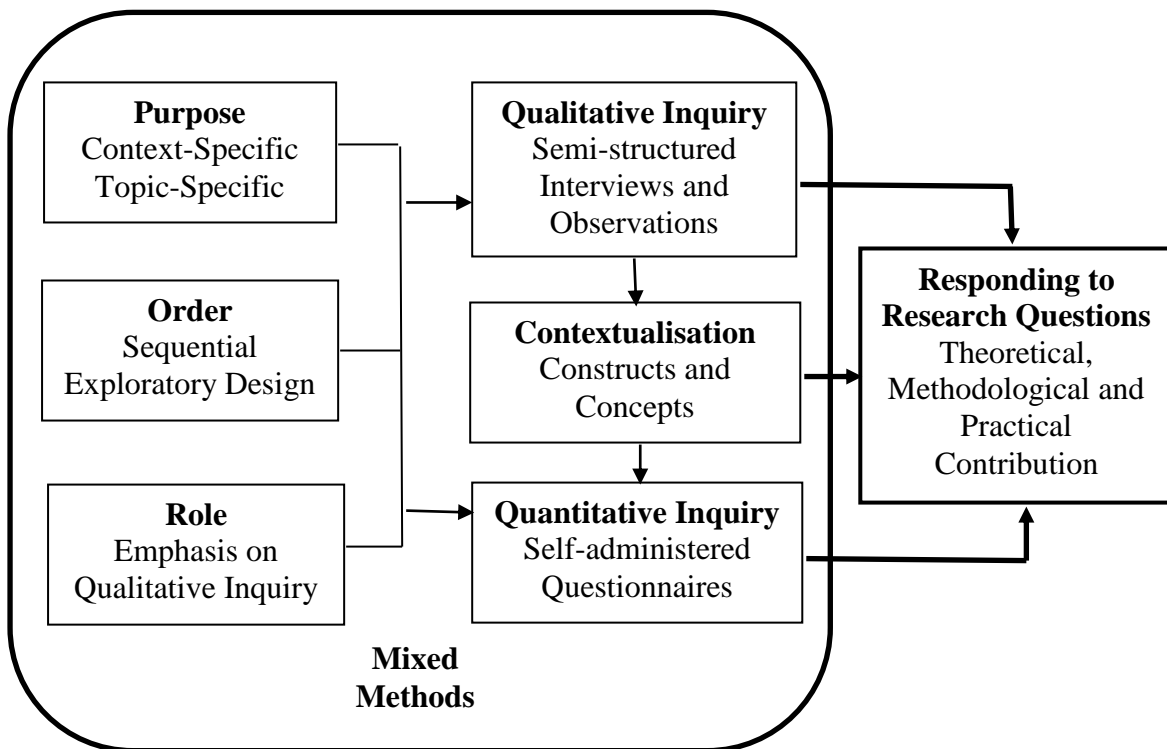


Figure 5. 3. *Rationale for mixed methods approach.*

5.3 Contextualising research

Local actions and interpretations are always embedded in the social world (Morrow & Brown, 1994). Rousseau and Fried (2001) highlight that one researcher's context is another researcher's career, which demonstrates a greater interest among scholarly researchers in the role of context to capture robust theories that can reflect the complexity of organizational

phenomena and relations, thus offer predictive power and real-world relevance (Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007). Context and its implications for theorising have received attention in the field of strategic management (McKiernan, 2006), organizational behaviour (Johns, 2006), entrepreneurship (Zahra, 2007), marketing (Arnould et al., 2006), international business phenomena (Ghauri, 2004; Michailova, 2011; Tsui, 2007; Welch et al., 2011), and leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004; Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Jepson, 2008; Osborn et al., 2002; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; Tosi, 1991; Shamir & Howell, 1999). Organizations are open systems; thus, context should not be ignored or dismissed (Tsui, 2006). This section looks at how context is significant and how important it is to contextualise theory, methods and findings in this study.

5.3.1 The role of contextualisation in leadership studies

To contextualise means ‘to knit together’ or ‘to make a connection’ in Latin, referring to ‘situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables’ (Jones, 2006, p. 386). Contextualisation is about ‘linking observations to a set of relevant facts, events, or points of view that make possible research and theory that form part of a larger whole’ (Rousseau & Fried, 2001, p. 1). Contextualising is a sensitising device to make the researcher aware of the potential situational and temporal boundary conditions to the theories and a basis for management theory (Bamberger, 2008). As clearly stated by Buchanan and Bryman (2007), the choice of method is not only determined by the research aims, norms of practice or concerns over paradigms, it also is affected by the combination of organizational, historical, political and ethical characteristics of the research field, which need to be addressed in the choice of method.

Context is a major factor affecting leadership behaviour and outcomes (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Leadership is a practice that does not take place in a vacuum but in organizational contexts. Porter and McLaughlin (2006) consider context as a situation similar to ‘the weather: many talking about it, but very few doing much about it insofar as empirical research is concerned’ (p. 559). Leadership studies have been dominated by the objective to find universal or nation specific attributes to distinguish among different characteristics of leaders (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Fiedler, 1967; House, 1977; House & Dessler, 1974; Lewin et al., 1939; McGregor, 1960; Stogdill, 1948; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). However, because leadership is complex in nature, researchers have

come to acknowledge the role of context in research (Jepson, 2008). Still, there are weaknesses in how the role of context is understood. ‘The lack of attention paid to context as the primary focus of research, the limited way in which context has been conceptualised, the presence of contradictory research findings on the nature and importance of context and a tendency to treat context as a predominantly static phenomenon’ (Jepson, 2008, p. 37) illustrate issues concerning context in leadership studies. Narrow sets of pre-defined contextual factors such as skills, organizational culture, span of control (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Fiedler, 1967; Gronn, 2003; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Theimann, 2006), the application of leadership models in a specific context, and testing their universal nature (Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2002; Brodbeck et al., 2000; Egri & Herman, 2000; Ford & Ismail, 2006; Jung & Avolio, 1999; Schneider & Littrell, 2003) show lack of contextualisation in doing research.

The problem with context and leadership studies is that the context has been inadequately conceptualised and empirically explored in different ways – culture, country, community, organization, department/division, team, and individual – despite its significance and complexity (Dansereau et al., 1999; Yammarino et al., 2005). In general, leadership studies are unclear about ‘how far context influences individuals and, alternatively, the extent to which individuals draw on different contexts at different points in time to construct their own understanding of leadership, [...] whether some contexts exert a greater influence over both the understanding and practice of leadership than others’ (Jepson, 2008, p. 38). Therefore, exploring context-sensitive leadership is important.

Contextualization has a major role in leadership studies and it is one of the most important factors of this research. Indeed, the study on Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) found that leadership effectiveness is contextual, dependent on social and organizational norms, values and beliefs (House et al., 2004). Based on Tsui’s (2006) guidelines on contextualization, the following sections demonstrate the specific contextualization approaches in this study, responding to the criticism in the literature that much non-Western focused research fails to be contextually sensitive in applying Western theories and research methods in conducting research in non-Western contexts (Meyer, 2006; Whetten, 2009). According to Whetten (2009), when a study is conducted in a context-sensitive manner, the improvement and application of the borrowed theory becomes more meaningful and locally responsive and relevant. While grounded in

Western mainstream literature and theory, this study has many context-specific features, and the critical-realist philosophical approach of the study also emphasises contextualization as the foundation to develop an understanding and explanation of the phenomena under study that corresponds to the local context.

5.3.2 Contextualising theory – from application to creation

Contextualisation can advance management theories in developing innovative theories and formulating novel questions (Gelfand et al., 2007; Kirkman et al., 2006; Schaffer & Riordan, 2003), yet scholars have not taken it seriously to the extent that, in different political, economic, social and cultural contexts, the application and replication of theories may lead to biased conclusions (Johns, 2006; Tsui, 2007). Deep contextualisation is important for the development and meaningful application of existing theory in novel contexts (Tsui, 2007). In fact, there is argument that context effects are central to understanding organizational phenomena, thus contextual analysis should be treated as a distinctive feature of organizational scholarship (House et al., 1995; Johns, 2006; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Rousseau, 1985).

Whetten (2009) highlights that theory development is a systematic borrowing process, whereby a theory developed in one context is applicable in a different context, taking into consideration the theoretical contextual differences. According to Tsui (2007), such application can make a theoretical contribution based on before-and-after comparisons, subject to the borrower's vision influenced by the colour of the borrowed lens that may affect perception of the phenomenon in its natural form. There are different ways that context and theory can interplay: contextualised theory – developing theory in context or contextualising extant theory; and context effect theory – developing theories of context or utilising context to formulate new theories (Whetten, 2009). Adding contextualised layers to theory not only contributes to innovative theories in novel contexts of study but also improves management theories (Tsui, 2007). This study follows the process of contextualised theory in contextualising spiritual leadership theory from a Buddhist perspective in the context of Vietnam with the aim of unpacking the meaning of constructs and developing a Buddhist-enacted leadership model.

However, there are challenges in contextualising theory. Tsui (2004) claims that analysis in this approach may distort existing theory and its underlying logic, especially in Western

theories, where sets of assumptions are underpinned by Western cultural and institutional values. As such, application of a theory to a new concept may result in meaningless predictions. Contextualisation has to be based on adequate 'knowledge of the cultural assumptions of both the original and new context' to 'enhance the validity of the theory in the new context, derive counterintuitive hypotheses, and increase the predictive accuracy of the theory' (Tsui, 2006, p. 5). A good theory needs to both inform and delight the audience, artistically creating an image of a theory of a phenomenon that is surprising, delighting and intriguing (Weick, 1995).

This study was contextualised by exploring whether the constructs of Fry's spiritual leadership theory – namely vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, inner life, calling and membership – are applicable in the context of Vietnam and what they actually mean from a Buddhist perspective by using a qualitative grounded-theory approach guided by critical realism. In-depth interviews were conducted with leaders specifically to identify the meanings and underlying assumptions of how those constructs are interpreted. The interpretation of such constructs in the Buddhist context may significantly differ from that in the original theory.

As Fry's original theory was developed in the West (primarily the United States), based on a Christian perspective on spirituality, it is expected that there will be novel definitions and interpretations of the constructs in the context of this study. Buddhism and the principles of non-self, for example, may distinctively affect Buddhist practitioners' approaches in articulating visions. Karmic consequences and their implications for desires and suffering in Buddhism will likely to have impact on the constructs of calling and leaders' expectations of organisational outcomes. As such, context in this study serves a significant role contributing to theory development.

5.3.3 Contextualising methods – from sharpening old tools to developing new instruments

Buchanan and Bryman (2007) highlight the importance of contextualising methods in research because contextualisation is part of the data stream; reflecting specific research settings and analysis and interpretations of theoretical and practical outcomes. On the other hand, Shapiro et al. (2007) introduce 'the polycontextual sensitive research method to

supplement the scientific deductive research typically designed to study observable phenomena based on a singular context that are controllable by the researcher's stimuli and/or measures' (p. 129). Tsui (2006) called contextualisation in methods as the modification of existing 'fishing' tools to create new fishing instruments. Fieldwork goes beyond the 'sterile exercise of data gathering' (Devereux & Hoddinott, 1992, p. 18); and the accuracy of the data itself can be compromised by ignoring methodological contextualisation, which involves both contextualising the process of conducting fieldwork and contextualising the outcome of the research (Michailova, 2004). Effective contextualisation with the method should reflect how 'outsiders can question the assumptions and help the insiders to articulate their experiences and source of these experiences by asking questions that would never be asked by the insiders themselves [...] outsiders can also improve their understanding [...] by plunging into the waters' (Tsui, 2006, p. 11). Critically in contextualization is therefore needed.

Contextualisation should not be considered as an external construct in qualitative research, but rather a part of doing research that forms the nature of the fieldwork (Michailova, 2004; Michailova & Clark, 2004). Contextualisation needs to be considered simultaneously as an important methodological issue and not just a natural part of the qualitative fieldwork (Michailova, 2004, 2011). Contextualisation is inseparable from the fieldwork in qualitative research in the sense that it takes 'subjectivity seriously, utilizing, valuing and learning from it, rather than criticizing, avoiding, excusing and attempting to overcome it' (Michailova 2011, p. 135). However, quantitative research is not immune from this as the design of questionnaires or surveys depends on the particular context they are intended to be used in with specific meanings and context-embedded interpretations of the questions, rather than context-free. Traditionally, context in quantitative research is treated as 'noise in the data, or other controlled variables which are experimentally set up in order to seek for cause and effect relationships' (Harvey & Myers, 1995, p. 7). However, context is not a noise (Michailova, 2011): it reflects the reality that without it there would be no phenomena to be explored and there would be no surprising or interesting factors to be discovered.

In this study, the outcomes of the preliminary quantitative phase highlight weaknesses in testing Fry's spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam without prior contextualization. Therefore, an outsider examining how Buddhist principles are enacted in

leadership practices in the context of Vietnam needs to plunge into the ‘water’ as an insider to fully comprehend how actual practice is taking place. Buddhist practices are diverse and different practitioners may behave differently. Hence, to capture the underlying assumptions of such practices, there is a need for context-sensitive methods of inquiry. Taking into account the nature of Buddhist practice and the context of Vietnam, the contextualization method involves the following steps:

- (1) Conducting in-depth interviews concurrently with review of the relevant Buddhist literature practised by each particular leader;
- (2) Taking part in internal Buddhist organizational events and leader–follower sharing sessions in organizations, where available, to explore hidden underlying assumptions and reactions on the spot;
- (3) Noting the metaphors in expressions, interpretations and even in observation during interviews, since metaphor and even silence are a powerful means in Buddhism.

Buddhist practice is context-dependent rather than content-reliant. Therefore unpacking and contextualising a specific wording, gesture or expression is very important. Exploration in the qualitative method in this sense is subject to high-context interpretations that require the researcher not only to have adequate knowledge of the content of Buddhist practice but also to carefully observe, relate to the literature and ask follow-up questions where necessary. In fact, the personal touch and face-to-face interactions have been proved to be important in emerging market contexts (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2006), especially where it is common for Buddhist practitioners in Vietnam who are less likely to announce their Buddhist practices in public. Building up trust and networks is therefore vital to approach this specific type of population. Meeting face-to-face is practical and can enhance interpersonal relationships and networks for study (Michailova, 2004; Shi, 2001), especially in the high-context culture of Vietnam.

The qualitative part, guided by a grounded-theory approach, is vital in this mixed-methods inquiry in order to contextualise the spiritual leadership theory for further examination of the quantitative phase. Contextualising the quantitative phase is based on the outcomes of the qualitative phase to examine and validate Buddhist-enacted leadership practices from the perspective of employees. The mixed-methods approach in this study is a context-sensitive inquiry in appreciating local-context interpretations through qualitative inquiry, but at the

same time making sure that such interpretations are rigorous and not biased through quantitative inquiry.

5.3.4 Contextualising findings

There are concerns over the difficulties in testing Eastern constructs that are distinct from Western concepts in relation to construct equivalence, salience and infusion that might have an impact on research findings, such as ‘reinventing the wheel’ (Barkema et al., 2015). It has been suggested that, rather than only taking into consideration the context itself, researchers should contextualise their methodologies to arrive at and develop context theories (Bamberger, 2008; Michailova, 2011; Tsui, 2007). Contextualisation offers opportunities for future research in exploring variations in research findings by studying whole events and sources of interest, organizational phenomena and counter-intuitive findings (Jones, 2001; 2006). In this research, the data are analysed and interpreted in the given context and are compared to previous research findings to make sure that there is sufficient explanation for any variations in the research outcomes and to make them helpful for future studies. Local knowledge of the researcher as a Vietnamese was used to help contextualise the findings of the study in interpreting and integrating the local context in the findings. Understanding by the researcher of social norms, cultural identity and Vietnamese Buddhism and spirituality was also helpful to identify distinctive cultural phenomena. Thus, contextualising findings incorporates locally relevant knowledge and the general literature in responding to the need for fully understanding the context to aid in theorisation (Tsui, 2006).

5.4 Data collection approach

This section explains the researcher’s approaches. The section clarifies how access was gained to the research field, how participants were selected and the challenges in collecting data in the research context.

5.4.1 Challenges in collecting data in Vietnam

Napier, Hosley, and Nguyen (2004, p. 385) describe Vietnam as a ‘premature research context’, where academic research has not met international standards. One reason for this perspective is because business practitioners show reluctance, with unenthusiastic and subdued responses to academic research in Vietnam because they believe that academic

studies in Vietnam lack rigorous theoretical models and reasoning (Napier et al., 2004). Thus, there has always been a difference in business practitioners and academic researchers, resulting in a lack of cooperation between both groups. Access to the research field, therefore, is limited and is largely subject to networks and especially to trust and familiarity towards the researcher. Even with third-party assistance and introductions to gain access for the fieldwork, it still requires determination, persistence and patience (Soulsby, 2004), since the researcher is dependent on the goodwill of ‘gatekeepers’ who have the power to control access to research sites (Whitley, 1984, p. 375) and defensive behaviour of respondents. Napier et al. (2004) highlight the considerations and challenges in conducting research in the context of Vietnam as follows: (1) interviews have to be convenience samples rather than random samples; (2) the mail system is unreliable; (3) lack of sampling frames; (3) participants are not willing to complete surveys from strangers; (4) surveys are unfamiliar to most people; and (5) expectation for payment or reward in return for survey completion. However, Napier et al. (2004) advise that the qualitative approach is well suited to the Vietnamese context, where trust, agreement, personal introductions and direct involvement is very important.

Another challenge of fieldwork, as highlighted by Soulsby (2004), is the ‘surprise’ element. ‘Being in the field is never static’ (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 46). No matter how the researcher has prepared, even making the most diligent preparation for having the resources in place (Yin, 1989), the researcher is expected to be flexible to ‘conceal our disappointments with a polite and cheerful smile and venting our frustrations in private later’ (Soulsby, 2004, p. 44). As a result, collecting data in the fieldwork requires a high level of emotional stability and mental and emotional energy. It is particularly important in the context of Vietnam, where there are the cultural norms of face-saving and respect for seniority that need to be addressed attentively in conducting interviews at senior management and leadership levels.

Furthermore, the study involves participants from various industries, which requires flexibility in adapting to different types of sites, especially when interviews and face-to-face interactions take place there. The researcher was also challenged in interpreting various types of leadership styles with different applied Buddhist practices subject to respondents’ organizational and individual contexts. Thus, the researcher needed to be prepared and to have pre-studied each company involved in the research to limit any misunderstanding or

crestfallen feelings during interviews as well as to connect with Human Resource and Employee Relations departments for assistance in the quantitative phase involving the distributing of survey questionnaires.

5.4.2 Access to the research field

Fieldwork access was supported by the researcher's network of acquaintances who were practising Buddhists in their leadership and management roles. These participants were willing to arrange appointments for interviews and later on supported the researcher in gaining access to their companies. To access some hidden or hard-to-reach populations, snowball sampling was used for the qualitative research phase. Many Buddhist practitioners do not present themselves as Buddhists because they consider it to be a personal pursuit that involves modesty and humility, an identity which cannot necessarily be identified by outsiders. Therefore, to know exactly who are Buddhists in their leadership roles as an outsider is almost impossible. However, Buddhist practitioners tend to involve themselves in a community where they share Buddhist practices or a Buddhist teacher or master. Thus, snowball sampling was particularly important to build up a network for this study.

As stated by Napier et al. (2004), there is also the reality of poor survey response in Vietnam, where relationships dominate all aspects of life, mainly because people are not comfortable with giving information to strangers. Avoiding asking interview participants, as leaders, to help to distribute the surveys was important because doing this could have resulted in biases in completing the surveys: for example, survey respondents would have completed the surveys to please their leaders. Alternatively, support from leaders' secretaries was sought for introductions to company events (where available) and to employee representatives to get connections to employees. Following that, the researcher asked some employees that they got to know personally to send out the surveys to allay employee suspicions about completing them.

5.4.3 Participants and sampling

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines for purposeful sampling were applied in selecting participants. There were two types of participants involved in this study. For the qualitative phase of the study, participants who were Buddhist practitioners (for Script A) and spiritual

but non-Buddhist practitioners (for Script B) in the roles of leadership and upper management were invited to participate in the study. These participants were chosen because they were appropriate for the main research question concerning how they enacted and applied Buddhist practices in their leadership and they were needed for comparisons between Buddhist practitioners and spiritual but non-Buddhist practitioners in leadership roles. After the initial interviewees were identified, the snowball technique was used, asking each one for recommendations as to who would be the best to share his or her expertise and experience in exploring the research questions. This technique was particularly important and useful for the research as Buddhist practitioners tend to be involved in a Buddhist community, which is known by outsiders to only a limited extent. The total number of interviewees was 31, of whom 24 were Buddhist practitioners in leadership roles and seven were spiritual but not Buddhist. In the qualitative phase, the author additionally conducted non-participant observations for about one hour at the companies of selected Script A respondents. Participant observations at special Buddhist events were also conducted in two companies on two Saturdays and at an opening ceremony for the Buddha Yoga Center of a participant's company.

The second phase of the research involved randomly chosen participants who were employees of a number of interviewees to further evaluate the outcome of the Buddhist-enacted leadership practices identified in the qualitative phase of the study. In this phase, with the cooperation from organizational departments, a valid sample of 376 participants was obtained.

5.4.4 Data collection

Five techniques were used for collecting data: (1) semi-structured one-to-one and face-to-face interviews; (2) semi-structured one-to-one interviews via Skype; (3) non-participant and participant observations; (4) printed and electronic documentation provided by interview participants; and (5) questionnaires from randomly selected interview participants' employees. All the interviews either face-to-face or via Skype were audio recorded with prior permission and transcribed for coding purposes. The qualitative phase, especially interviews as the main source, was relied on to explore the application of Buddhist principles and practices and their impact on leadership. Observations, documentation and questionnaire results serve as important supplementary and triangulation sources to gain better perspectives

on key issues and more robust understanding of actual events and their presentation to different constituencies and discrepancies among respondents (Jick, 1979; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

5.5 Research methods

To answer the research questions, the study had two phases: qualitative research through in-depth interviews to explore the research topic, and quantitative research to verify the leadership practices identified in Phase One.

5.5.1 Qualitative research – A grounded theory approach

Based on the outcome of the preliminary quantitative phase of the study and the critical-realist philosophical approach of the study, the exploratory nature of this research required a qualitative grounded-theory approach that utilised an interpretive, naturalistic approach to subjects and phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). A grounded theory is appropriate for understanding phenomena within their contexts by linking concepts and behaviours and refining and generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

Kempster and Parry (2011) also suggest that the context and process of leadership is strongly reflected in the methodology of grounded theory. Additionally, properly chosen and conducted qualitative research in the field of leadership presents various opportunities for future research (namely longitudinal studies) and to explore leadership phenomena more in-depth (Bryman, 1992). Qualitative research can also detect and discover unexpected or surprising phenomena during research (Lundberg, 1976), explore contextual factors (Conger, 1998), and engage with quantitative approaches to verify the outcomes of leadership practices (Bryman, 2004).

The intent of using grounded theory in this study is to generate credible descriptions and sense-making of people's actions in shaping leadership orientations and approaches. Grounded theory originally was a method of studying observable phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) but later was developed and promoted by Parry (1998) as a method for researching a non-observable phenomenon – such as leadership. This approach is particularly

valuable for leadership studies. Leadership is embedded in nests of intrapsychic, behavioural, interpersonal, organizational and environmental phenomena (Avolio & Bass, 1995) and has symbolic component (Conger, 1998). It is hard to say that there is a general theory of leadership that can explain every aspect of the leadership concept, processes and practices adequately (Yukl, 1998), although attempts have been made to do so (Goethals and Sorenson, 2006; Gill, 2011). Additionally, leadership has a subjective component that has implications for research methods (Conger, 1998; Hunt, 1991; Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

Grounded theory, therefore, with its interpretative dimensions, contributes to understanding how leadership is defined and experienced. Grounded theory is also suitable for deeper examination and contextual detail (Kempster & Parry, 2011), which enables a contextually rich perspective on capturing the process of shaping leadership (Bryman, 1996; Parry, 1998; Egri & Herman, 20). This approach has been applied by some scholars to emphasise the contextualized and processual factors in the way that leadership is manifested (Kan & Parry, 2004; Rowland & Parry, 2009). This approach is also crucial in exploring the incorporation of Buddhist principles in leadership, especially in a complex transitional context, through contextualized understanding and explanation of the construction and implementation of spiritual leadership practices.

Although grounded theory is often criticized for being merely a form of journalism and lacking the rigour of a good scientific research (Silverman, 2001), engaging in a systematic analyzing of the data (see analysis sections) and applying a critical-realist philosophy underlying the grounded theory can overcome such criticisms. For instance, a critical-realist approach can reveal underlying assumptions of power structures in leadership through embedded meanings, practices and relationships as structures affecting people (Porpora, 1989; Fleetwood, 2004). Critical realism also helps the researcher to be cautious of local cause-and-effect relationships in and universal conceptions of leadership (Kempster & Parry, 2011), which is useful in the examination of Fry's spiritual leadership in an Eastern context. Furthermore, as a form of pragmatism (Johnson & Duberley, 2003), critical realism can guide the grounded-theory approach in gaining practical adequacy to allow a theory to grasp enough reality for conceptualization (Sayer, 1992).

In that sense the combination of critical realism and grounded theory can not only explore the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics based on the application of Buddhist philosophies and practices but also through explaining the social theory and process of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in Vietnam. Therefore, a grounded-theory approach can help to examine embedded causal relationships in shaping Buddhist-enacted rather than just drawing explanations from the surface level of experiences or data. In other words, a grounded-theory approach guided by critical realism provides methodological approaches for exploring substantially deeper, not in a speculative or unscientific way, but with internal validity, resonating with the reality and the nature of external validity through deep immersion in the local context (Kempster & Parry, 2011).

Taking a critical-realist-informed grounded-theory approach in this study thus responds to increasing calls for qualitative studies. First, this approach responds to Benefiel's and colleagues' (2014) call for exploratory studies on spiritual leadership. Second, it responds to Bryman's (2004) call for more qualitative research in leadership studies that are both contextualised and generative. Lastly, Shaw (2017) and Eisenhardt and colleagues (2016) call for more inductive studies in management to respond to contemporary grand challenges – such as the complex transitional context of Vietnam.

The qualitative part of this study involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with interviewees in upper management and leadership positions in various companies in diverse industries. Where possible and available, observations were recorded and internal documents were collected for further analysis along with the interviews. The following table 5.4 presents the data inventory in the qualitative phase.

Figure 5. 4 *Qualitative Data Inventory*

	Data type	Quantity	Original data source
Script A	Interviews	24	Buddhist leaders and upper managers in organizations in various industries
	Interview Transcripts	193 pages	
		Around 30 hours of observation	Approximately one-hour observations where possible at respondents' organizations
	Observations	4 hours of observation	Saturday company Buddhist ceremonies
		2 hours of observation	The opening ceremony of the Buddha Yoga Center of an interview participant's company
Script B	Documentation	2 types of documents	Electronic versions of company profiles Handouts from Buddhist company events and other Buddhist business-related symposiums
	Interviews	7	Non-Buddhist leaders and upper managers in organizations in various industries
	Interview Transcripts	49 pages	

5.5.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The interview method has been chosen in this research to meet the requirements of the exploratory nature of the study. A qualitative interview-based study by its nature seeks to establish in-depth understanding of respondents in their perceptions and experience of a particular action, process or event (Wainwright, 1997). There are a number of reasons why this method was adopted. Firstly, it 'exhorts the interviewer to remain aloof while seeking to extract information from the respondent' (Ram, 1994, p. 32). Secondly, it provides insight into what the interviewee considers relevant and important by having flexibility in asking follow-up questions or wording the questions (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Thus, ambiguous and unclear questions can be clarified for the interviewees to maximise the value of the information that needs to be collected.

The semi-structured interview was adopted in the study for in-depth exploration. This approach was guided by an interview schedule but had a high degree of flexibility (Bryman, 2001) for both the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2003). With this form of

research, interviewers need not follow the exact outline of the schedule but can pick up on things said by interviewees, and interviewees are encouraged to elaborate on how they frame and understand events, patterns and other forms of behaviour. This method is particularly significant in this study in order to allow leaders an opportunity to describe in detail their leadership styles that may not necessarily be based on general Buddhist principles or practices.

5.5.1.2 Interview design

The interview questions were based on the main constructs of the spiritual leadership model (Fry, 2003, 2016). Apart from the general information and background section, the interview questions were categorised into sections to capture respondents' understanding of each construct in the context of Vietnam. Questions were designed to contextualise and elaborate Buddhist interpretations of the following constructs: faith, vision, mission and purpose, meaning and values, belongingness and community, altruistic love, calling, membership, organizational outcomes, and responses to their contemporary organizational context. The aim was to gain in-depth information for theory interpretation from a Buddhist perspective.

There were two interview questionnaires for the purposes of comparison between Buddhist-enacted leadership and spiritual leadership. Script A was designed for Buddhist practitioners in their role in leadership or upper management and Script B was designed for non-Buddhist practitioners in similar roles and positions. The interview questionnaire in Script A consisted of 39 questions (see Appendix F); Script B had 33 questions (see Appendix F). Script A had more questions than Script B because of the exploratory nature of the research for Buddhist practitioners: in Script A more questions were added relating to Buddhist principles, qualities and practices.

The interviews lasted 45–60 minutes. To avoid follow-up questions that might have biased members' responses in the interviewer's interpretation, follow-up questions were asked only to clarify new, important or repeatedly mentioned issues.

5.5.1.3 Interview approach and schedule

Guided by the critical-realist approach to investigate the 'underlying causal mechanisms (including actors' understandings and rationales for action), the varying contexts in which

such mechanisms operate and the resultant outcomes' (Smith & Elger, 2012, p. 11), the interview process was highly interactive. The interview process involved collaboration between the interviewer and interviewees to interact to construct meaning and narrative together, with interviewer 'activating, stimulating and cultivating the subjects' interpretative capabilities' (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 122). The interviewer also gave opportunities for respondents to be active: '[a respondent] not only holds facts and details of experience, but in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from and transforms the facts and details' for the researcher to 'harness respondents' constructive storytelling for the research task at hand' (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 117, 125). However, to accumulate the needed information, knowledge of the events and processes for narrative analysis, the author was also careful to retain some control over the process of interviews because 'they are never simply conversations' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 152). Probing questions to invite further detail or to overcome any initial resistance and vagueness were asked to clarify respondents' answers.

With this interview approach, the author was able to critically appraise the accuracy of respondents' accounts and explanations, comparing and assessing the information gathered alongside other interview respondents (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

The interviews were conducted in various settings, including respondents' offices and homes, cafés and other preferred locations at interviewees' convenience, but mostly were conducted at respondents' companies where it was also possible to carry out support observations in addition. All interviews were conducted, recorded and then transcribed in Vietnamese for analysis. Double translation – into English and back to Vietnamese – was applied to make sure that the original meaning of the text was not lost or distorted during translation. Additionally, field notes were taken to highlight the significant observations and findings from each interview such as field notes on emotional responses of the respondents or how they dealt with interruptions during the interview. All analysis was carried out in English.

In some interviews, more than one hour was needed and allowed for the respondents to give explicit, detailed description and illustrations in answer to questions. In these longer interviews, follow-up questions made a significant contribution to the study.

5.5.1.4 Sampling of the qualitative phase

The total number of respondents for both Script A and Script B interviews was 31. Most respondents were founders, chief executive officers (CEO) and managing directors (22)¹⁶; and the rest were mostly country and regional managers (9). One particular respondent served as both an influential Venerable¹⁷ and a successful leader. The respondents came from a variety of sectors and industries (see Table 4.1). There was an equal distribution of participants in terms of gender: 16 females and 15 males.

The interviews were conducted intensively in November 2016 in Hà Nội and in Hồ Chí Minh City in Vietnam. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Only two interviews were conducted via Skype because the respondents were out of the country on business trips. Though face-to-face interviews have their advantages to allow one to witness respondents' facial expressions to evaluate the true meaning of their answers, phone interviews are an innovative alternative to costly face-to-face interviews, which in some cases encourage respondents to disclose truth as compared to the feeling of being 'interrogated' face-to-face (Crano & Brewer, 2002). It was found that there was no significant difference in terms of obtaining data using both techniques. This outcome has been supported in previous research (e.g. Greenfield et al., 2000). The following table 5.5 summarises information on interview respondents.

¹⁶ Numbers in brackets represent the number of respondents.

¹⁷ A title of respect applied to those who are ordained.

Figure 5. 5 *Summary of Interview Respondents*

Respondent		Background	Sector
1A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Financial Printing
2A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Pharmaceutical Distribution
3A	CEO	Buddhist	Construction/Investment
4A	Regional Manager	Buddhist	Education and Non-profit
5A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Software Consultancy
6A	Doctor, CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Medical Practice
7A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Printing
8A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Security Technology and Solution
9A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Trade and Beauty Service
10A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Education Consultancy
11A	Regional Manager	Buddhist	Pharmaceutical Distribution
12A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Education
13A	General Manager	Buddhist	Real Estate
14A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Food & Drink
15A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Event & Media
16A	Country Project Manager	Buddhist	National Water Resolution Project
17A	Venerable, CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Agriculture, Plant Transplant and Education
18A	Country Manager	Buddhist	Energy Management and Automation Solutions
19A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Printing and Education
20A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Food & Drink
21A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Transportation
22A	Lawyer, CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Law Consultancy
23A	CEO and Chief Accountant	Buddhist	Construction and Real Estate
24A	CEO and Managing Director	Buddhist	Communication
1B	Country Manager	Spiritual	Pharmaceutical
2B	Country Manager	Spiritual	Hospitality
3B	Regional Manager	Spiritual	Ceramics Distribution
4B	CEO and Managing Director	Spiritual	Mindfulness Training Service and Consultancy
5B	Health and Safety Manager	Spiritual	Oil Exploration and Production
6B	CEO and Managing Director	Spiritual	Business Event and Communication
7B	CEO and Managing Director	Spiritual	Education

5.5.1.5 Grounded theory analysis and thematic analysis of interview data

Data analysis is the process of searching for relationships and identifying themes and content in the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Analysing interviews is a crucial step, especially as interview talk is a cultural and collective phenomenon in itself that may consist of non-straightforward answers embedded in local and broader discursive systems (Wetherell & Potter, 1988).

For the qualitative phase of the study, grounded-theory analysis and thematic analysis were adopted. Grounded-theory analysis can generate a contextually rich perspective of the processes shaping leadership (Bryman, 1996; Egri & Herman, 2000; Parry, 1998), whilst thematic analysis is a search for important themes in the research phenomenon (Daly et al., 1997). The grounded theory analysis categorizes data in a systematic way that is related to a phenomenon to develop an integrative picture of the story to allow the explanation of the context-based phenomenon to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kempster & Parry, 2011). Thematic analysis on the other hand involves a systematic coding and categorising approach to explore the textual information to identify trends, patterns of words used, their frequency, relationships, structures and discourses in communication (Mayring, 2000; Pope et al., 2006; Gbrich, 2007).

Themes emerge from careful study of the data, which involves reading and re-reading (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Both analyses were chosen for this study because they allow deep immersion to identify relational and processual elements of Buddhist-enacted leadership as well as combining both approaches provide a flexible and useful research tool that identifies common threads extending across an entire set of interviews with a rich, detailed and complex account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000).

The grounded theory analysis in this study focused on ensuring rigour to consider causal mechanisms and contextual variables through open coding, followed by axial coding to generate theory, with a hierarchy of abstraction, and examining the theory in relation to the extant literature. For instance, open coding was used to identify important variables such as the emerging Buddhist principles that were applied in leadership practices. Axial coding then was used to identify relationships between the variables that reflected emerging phenomena, such as the causal mechanisms of applying particular Buddhist practices and leadership

outcomes to provide a theoretical explanation of the phenomena (see appendix M for example codes).

Context was emphasized in coding strategies to reflect the contextual meaning of the codes to provide valid and reliable explanations of the emerging phenomena, such as how the transitional context and institutional power, structure and paradoxes inform particular Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics. The aim of this approach was to present a social theory of the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in the context of Vietnam based on Fry's spiritual leadership model as a foundation for examining the processual formation of spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective, based on selective coding explaining the formation process. For instance, the analysis based on selective coding explored the contextual variables shaping the choice of Buddhist principles' in formulating leadership hope/faith that influences leadership vision from a Buddhist perspective and how such vision informs the application of Buddhist concepts in leaders' altruistic love. Along with grounded-theory analysis, thematic analysis was also used for clear data presentation that explains a social theory of spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective in the context of Vietnam.

The collected data was analysed according to six steps (Marshall & Rossman, 1999): data organization, themes and categories generalisation, data coding, emergent findings from the data, alternative explanations of the data, and analysis completion. These steps were divided into three stages: data screening, data interpretation and data analysis. These steps allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the data to reflect back to interview questions and emerging issues in more depth. In the data interpretation stage, reference to the literature gave theoretical meaning to the data and to make sure that the complexity of the data was retained to explore unforeseen unfamiliar patterns or patterns that appeared counter to the literature (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The thematic analysis in this research incorporated both a data-driven inductive approach to explore the themes and a deductive approach to organize the data into developed codes types. The following figure (Figure 5.4) summarises the interview analysis process adopted in this study.

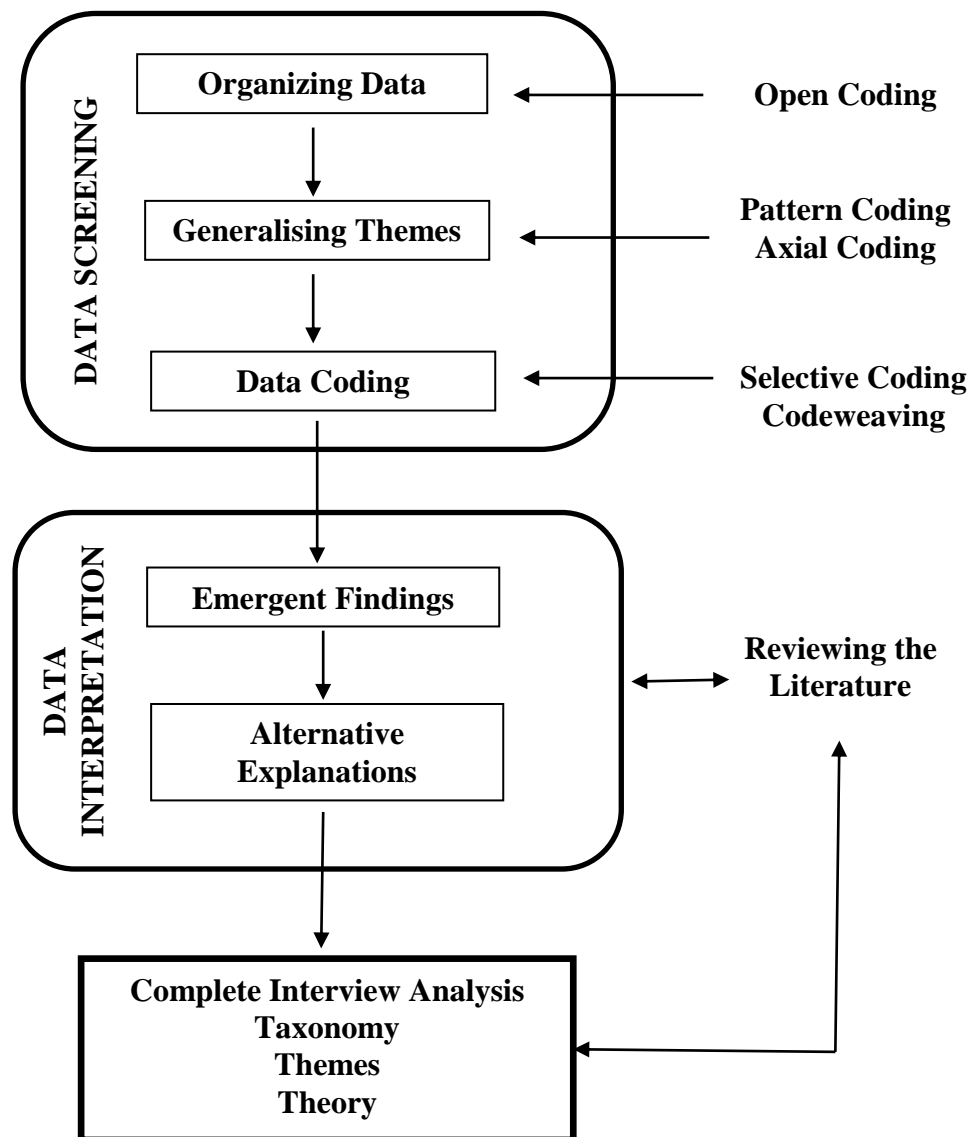


Figure 5. 6 Interview analysis steps.

Stage One: Data screening

Within the first stage of data screening, the interview data was systematically arranged to allow themes to emerge from data coding.

Organizing data: All transcripts and field notes were read several times to create data familiarisation. The author read all transcripts repeatedly to attain immersion and get a sense of the whole (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some additional contact was made with some respondents when there was doubt, ambiguity or uncertainty in screening the data. In this step, open coding was utilised to record any interesting or significant patterns in the data (Ezzy, 2002). As an exploratory step, the author used holistic coding ‘to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analysing them line by line’

(Dey, 1993, p. 104). Thus, the complexity of the data was retained by documenting and noting atypical, conflicting and contradictory patterns. The author applied interpretive reading (Mason, 2002) to the data to understand the data in the context of respondents. In this step, the data was also been analysed, conceptualised and categorised to be able to identify any formation of concepts or patterns by grouping similar interpretations, incidences and practices (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data coding: The purpose of this step was to apply the categories to the data and enable examples and illustrations for the data for analysis purposes. Coding provides a formal system to uncover and document any additional links within and between concepts or experiences presented by the respondents in the data set (Bradley et al., 2007). The author applied selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to refine the data, connecting patterns, consistencies and constructions with categories, themes and sub-themes, and to highlight atypical cases to cover a collective and comprehensive picture of the data. To identify items relevant to the research questions, the author applied a systematic process of looking for frequency (items appearing frequently), omission (items thought important by researcher but never appearing), and declaration (items identified as significant by participants) (LeCompte, 2000). After selective coding, the author used codeweaving, putting primary codes, categories, themes and concepts into a few sentences where possible (Saldaña, 2016, p. 276,) to suggest interrelationships, causations, processes and broader themes holistically.

There are various code types (Lofland, 1971; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in qualitative research. To develop the code structure and types, the author utilised an integrated hybrid approach that employs both inductive development of codes and deductive framework for code types (Bradley et al., 2007; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). To capture all the interpretations and personally embedded Buddhist and spiritual practices of the participants, the author applied four types of codes to the data: (1) conceptual codes and subcodes – identifying key concept domains and dimensions; (2) relationship codes – identifying links between coded concepts with conceptual codes; (3) participant perspective codes – identifying positive/negative/indifferent experience of the respondents; and (4) participant characteristics codes.

Generalising themes: In the next step, the author applied pattern and axial coding. Pattern codes are like meta codes: they help to pull together materials from first-order coding into more meaningful units of analysis (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). Pattern coding groups initial summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes and concepts. Axial coding on the other hand helps to establish themes across the interview data (Ezzy, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding determines ‘which codes in the research are the dominant ones and which are the less important ones to reorganize the data set: synonyms are crossed out, redundant codes are removed and the best representative codes are selected’ (Boeiji, 2010: 109). Axial coding also links categories with subcategories and specifies the relationships and dimensions of a category (Chamaz, 2014, p. 148). The generalised themes are internally consistent and externally divergent (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Besides an in-depth reflection on the data and notes, within the identified themes, related comments were noted and constant comparisons made to create interconnectedness across the data, making sure that initially appeared unrelated events that initially appeared could be sufficiently evaluated and grouped together if relevancy appeared later on (Broom, 2005).

To generate the main themes of both Script A and Script B interviews, the author first used open coding, then reduced the number of initial codes using axial and selective coding. For Script A, the initial 1,048 codes were reduced to 534 codes and categorised into 12 themes (see Appendix K). For Script B, 287 initial codes were reduced to 140 codes and also categorised into 12 themes (see Appendix L). The themes described spiritual leadership constructs from a Buddhist perspective in the distinctive spiritual context of Vietnam. They indicated how Buddhist and spiritual factors in the transitional Vietnamese context from leaders’ perspectives shape leadership characteristics and understanding of the universe, leadership vision, faith, hope, inner life, altruistic love, calling, membership, organizational outcomes and leadership responses to contextual challenges.

The following Figure 5.7 summarises the steps taken to establish data structure and theme categorisation.

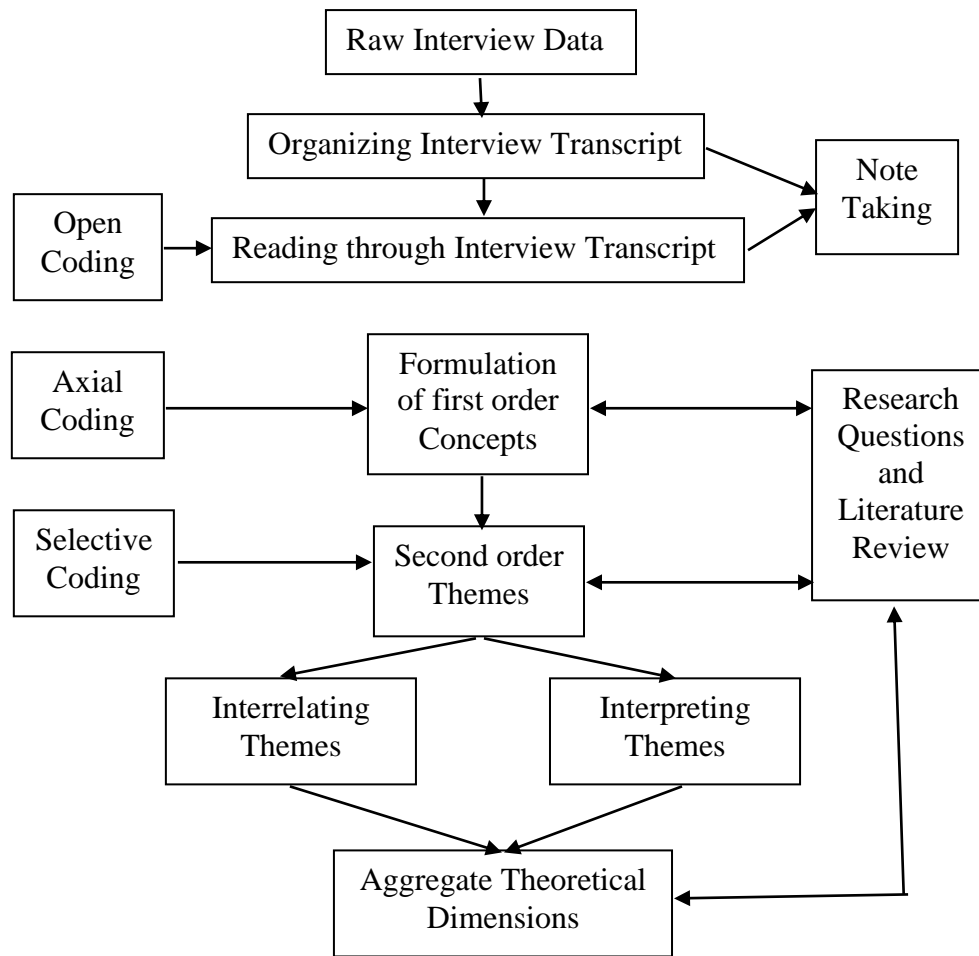


Figure 5. 7. Steps to establish data structure and theme categorisation.

Stage 2: Data interpretation

Having understood the data through data screening and coding, the researcher took an in-depth look at the data to interpret it and allow new findings to emerge. All contextual variables and causal mechanisms identified in the grounded-theory analysis were included in the data interpretation to provide a reliable and valid social theory of the formation of spiritual leadership in a Buddhist-engaged context that was contextually relevant, reflecting local characteristics.

Emerging findings: After categories and themes were established, the data started to present their stories, and an understanding of the data then emerged with a possible development of theoretical constructs. Marshall and Rossman's (1999) suggestion to search for data that challenged emergent understanding was used. The literature at this step was brought in for

comparisons with the data to identify conceptual tools that could be used to make sense of the patterns that emerged from the data. This step was more about encouraging the emergence of categories that reflected the nuances of the data rather than about reducing it to oversimplified behaviours (Pope et al., 2000).

Alternative explanations: After new patterns had been identified, the literature was considered to seek an alternative understanding of the data, being flexible and making sense of confusion by reinterpreting the data, which could lead to new ways of understanding it when new ideas are put together.

Stage 3: Data Analysis

NVivo10 was used to assist in the data analysis process. Script A and Script B interviews were coded separately (see Appendix K and Appendix L) and a comparative analysis was made in the relevant themes. Supporting documents were included in the analysis to provide further clarification and to give meaning to the context of analysis. Grounded theory and thematic analysis were used for the rich data based on open, selective and axial coding, emphasizing the role of context in shaping choices in applying Buddhist principles that generate contextually responsive Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics. The major themes were unpacked, described, contextualised and interpreted with relevant supporting quotes and contexts. Writing up the interview analysis involved a comparative and integrated approach to the data and literature to make sure that there were a sound interpretation and analysis of the data based on both theoretical concepts and empirical findings.

The outcome of the interview data analysis was to generate a taxonomy, themes and theory. Taxonomies improve description, measurement and evaluation of real phenomena based on multifaceted intervention and multiple domain and dimensions, while theory and themes guide the research to explain and predict the outcomes of the research (Bradley et al., 2007), particularly enabling the role of context and contextualisation to emerge.

Taxonomy: Taxonomy enables the classification of multifaceted, complex phenomena (Patton, 2002) based on set of conceptual domains and dimensions to promote clarity and compare diverse, complex interventions (Sofaer, 1999) in consideration with contextual

variables. It was useful to unpack how the intervention and application of different Buddhist principles may have influenced the development of leadership practices.

Themes: Themes are fundamental phenomena (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) linking concepts about the subject of inquiry (Boyatzis, 1998) enabling one to characterise specific individual experiences of the participants by more general insights apparent from the whole data (Bradley et al., 2007). Themes emerged from conceptual codes and subcodes and from relationship codes that linked concepts to data, and from comparative analysis in different participant characteristic codes, such as the differences in the number of years among the participants of practising Buddhism and the implications of different interpretations and understanding of Buddhism regarding leadership styles, vision, purpose and responses.

Theory: Theory explains, predicts and interprets events or phenomena (Dubin, 1969; Kaplan, 1964; Merton, 1967) based on causal or relational mechanism in the process of social and context influence. It provides understanding of potential causal links, the context in which the phenomenon occurs, and the potential framework for future studies (Bradley et al., 2007). Theory development in this study evolved from conceptual codes and sub-codes – relationships, perspectives and participant characteristics – to explore spiritual leadership theory in the study context. Gioia, Corley and Hamilton's (2013) advice of cycling between emergent data, themes, concepts, dimensions and relevant literature after initial stages of analysis was followed to see whether the findings had precedents and whether there were newly discovered concepts.

In summary, grounded-theory analysis and thematic analysis were used in this study to unpack the complex role of context and its variables shaping Buddhist-enacted leadership practices, presenting the results in a way that reflected the processual and social formation of spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective. These analyses help to explain the manifestation of contextualised spiritual-leadership practices in the context of Vietnam and any emergent phenomena associated with the social theory of Buddhist-enacted leadership in that context.

5.5.1.6 Observations and documentation

Observations were carried out to support the qualitative grounded-theory approach in deeply examining the role of context in shaping Buddhist-enacted leadership and to understand the social phenomenon associated with leadership practices in the transitional context of Vietnam. Both participant and non-participant observations were carried out where possible at the companies of the Script A interviewees. Observations at Script B participants' companies were not carried out because most of the interviews with them were conducted outside respondents' companies. For the observations, the researcher arrived approximately one hour before the interviews and stayed one hour after the interviews to observe the interior design, decoration and atmosphere of the companies and to observe both employees' and leaders' activities and attitudes. In addition to that, the researcher participated in two company events: the Buddha Yoga Center inauguration ceremony at respondent 3A's company and two Saturday Buddhist-sharing events of respondents 23A and 24A, which were organized at 23A's company and at another venue outside respondent 24A's company. Additional documents were also obtained from these events together with other documents relating to Buddhist-enacted company events relating to respondents 15A and 19A. Observations by the researcher and the additional documents served as significant contributions in understanding the context and actual implementation of Buddhist-enacted leadership and practices within the organizations.

5.5.1.7 Content analysis of observations and documentation

To elucidate the observations and the contextual meaning of the text in the obtained documentation, content analysis was used because it focuses on the characteristics of language and communication in the text in verbal, print and electronic forms as well as interviews, observations, articles or manuals (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). The purpose of content analysis is 'to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study' (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314) representing either explicit or inferred communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Texts based on interviews and observations are contextual (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mishler, 1986). Texts have multiple layers of meaning dependent on different ways and degrees of interpretation and approaching to them (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). For instance, a text has both manifest and latent content. While manifest content reflects visible, obvious components of the content, the latent content of the text

invites interpretation of the underlying meaning of the text to explore its relationships (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Kondracki et al., 2002).

In this study, texts from observations and documents served to support and validate the analysis obtained from interview data. Observation notes, pictures and other documents acquired from some interview respondents were used, such as company guidelines for Buddhist events, talk shows, Buddhist-business training sessions, seminar documents and an instruction manual from the Buddha Yoga Centre and from other corporate projects that involved the introduction of Buddhist and mindfulness practices. Meaning unit analysis was carried out involving the constellation of words and statements relating to central meaning or content and context (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The author considered the context carefully, especially in describing the manifest context and in interpreting the underlying meaning of latent context where possible.

In summary, for the qualitative phase, a critical realist-guided grounded theory analysis and an iterative approach was taken to analysing the data, moving back and forth between empirical data and the literature and systematically and repeatedly examining the data against prior understanding based on immersion in the setting and against extant theory (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Furthermore, a naturalist view was taken to explore how understanding is socially constructed (Gephart, 2004) and produced authentic representations of the data (Gioia et al., 2013). There was a focus on the contextual authenticity of reasoning and empirical data (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). To generate rigorous analysis and authentic representation of the rich data set, to exit from the field, the mental, emotional and ethical aspects of exiting the field (Michailova et al., 2014) were considered. In addition, with an attempt to address issues of credibility in qualitative research, validity and reliability (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and authenticity, plausibility and criticality (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993) of the data were examined.

5.5.2 Quantitative research

This phase of the research was designed to examine the Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics identified in the qualitative phase.

5.5.2.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire design for this phase was based on the results of the qualitative phase (for further details, see appendix G). The demographic section of the questionnaire included six questions on basic information such as age, sex, position held, and so on. Based on the outcome of the qualitative phase, to examine the identified Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics, this phase asked respondents' to rate the identified leadership characteristics and provide further details in an open-ended question form. The questions asked respondents to examine and provide their thoughts on leadership characteristics such as compassion, emotional intelligence, ability to manage desires, orientation to social responsibilities, or leadership flexibility (see appendix G). A further three questions were asked in open-ended form to encourage respondents to provide more detail on what they specifically liked about their leaders and organizations and to provide any recommendations.

Because of the limitation in the time available for this research, it was impossible to carry out interviews with different organizational members of the interviewees' organizations; therefore, by carrying out a supporting quantitative phase with open-ended questions enabled the researcher to gain employees' perspectives on Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics. This was helpful in examining the outcome of the qualitative phase and provided a multi-perspective view of the social phenomena that were investigated.

5.5.2.2 Sampling

Sampling for this phase of the study involved employees of selected organizations in the previous qualitative phase. To avoid bias at this stage in collecting data, Human Resource and Employee Relations offices of a number of companies of interviewees' were contacted by email and asked for their assistance in inviting participation of employees in completing the survey questionnaire. Interference from interviewees (leaders) in this process was avoided to maintain unbiased responses from employees. A covering letter was provided explaining the background of the research and the benefits of participation in it. Follow-up telephone calls were made to the corresponding offices of the selected organizations when needed.

Not all interviewees agreed to participate in this phase of the study for a number of reasons. First, some of them considered their application of Buddhist principles in their leadership to be a personal (private) practice, and they did not want to reveal their personal choices in their

practices. Second, some organizations were undergoing organizational and structural changes, and the leaders of these organizations, understandably, believed that sending out a survey questionnaire at that particular point would have sent a confusing message to employees that may have affected their strategy of restructuring. For that reason, this remains one of the limitations of the study.

5.5.2.3 Analysis

There were two approaches taken to analyse the data from the quantitative phase. Statistical analysis using SPSS was applied for Likert-type questions in this section to identify whether or not the Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics from the qualitative phase were significant from employees' perspectives. Content analysis and NVivo 10 were utilised for open-ended questions to help to analyse the data. Data from open-ended questions provided important information for this study in further exploring the emergent themes from the qualitative phase from employees' perspectives and to reveal any gaps between leaders' and employees' perspectives for further research.

5.6 Reliability and validity of the research

This section examines the validity and reliability of the chosen methods.

5.6.1 Validity, reliability and credibility of qualitative inquiry

Research validity refers to the accuracy and credibility of the representation of participants' realities of social phenomena (Schwandt, 1997).

Based on the nature of this research, the author adopted Creswell and Miller's (2000) two perspectives of validity to examine the validity of the study: the lens a researcher chooses to validate research and the researcher's paradigm assumptions. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry assumes that reality is constructed based on the perception of what participants believe, thus the researcher's lens is not based on scores or instruments but by the people who conduct, participate and review the study. This involves a continuous return to the data 'over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense' (Patton, 1980, p. 339) and an interactive sense-making process (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). Additionally, researcher worldviews and assumptions also

contribute to their choice of procedures in doing research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ratcliffe, 1983).

The following table (Table 5.2 summarises the approaches used to validate the qualitative inquiry in this study.

Table 5. 2 *The Validity and Reliability of the Qualitative Inquiry of the Study*

Critical Perspectives	
Paradigm assumptions	<i>Critique of the modern state</i> : analysis includes reflection on issues such as: how practical are the Buddhist-enacted leadership practices; how are long-term and short-term objectives moderated; what are the real and context-based challenges in such leadership styles; is there equal contribution to CSR and sustainable practices; and how generalisable are such practices to other contexts?
	<i>How narratives are constructed and their underlying assumptions</i> : analysis to discover issues like possible conflicts in the reactions of shareholders/stakeholders to Buddhist leadership approaches; the reason behind why some practices work better than others; and the role of context.
	<i>Equality in research</i> : checking and tracking bias during research, making comparisons with the context, the literature and other available and appropriate sources.
Researcher reflexivity	
Lens of researcher	<i>Self-disclosure of the assumptions, beliefs and biases of the researcher</i> : acknowledgement of being a member of the Buddhist community, having a family member as an interview respondent, and having an Eastern-Buddhism oriented approach and worldview.
	Triangulation
	<i>Search for convergence among multiple sources of information</i> : to create themes and categories; to reduce bias from the researcher and selected respondents through interviews, additional archives and documentation and observation; and to search for applicable generalisable practices rather than only context-specific ones. Additional internal documentation consists of documents on community-involved practices and donations; non-profit operations; profiles/interviews on personal development of the Buddha Yoga Organization members, etc.

Collaboration	
Lens of study participants	<i>Participants are involved in the study as co-researchers</i> : acquiring participants' advice and critical reflection during the analysis period, especially when putting all narratives together in writing, sending e-mails back and forth to make sure that the data have been interpreted correctly and precisely.
Peer debriefing	
Lens of people external to the study	<i>Challenging researchers' assumptions, asking hard questions on methods and interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)</i> : the data interpreted will be sent back to respondents to make sure the content is deconstructed correctly and to evaluate the validity of the outcomes the respondents have claimed.

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Miller (2000)

The reliability of qualitative data is based on the agreement between multiple coders and transcribers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, NVivo 10 software was used to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis process.

To further examine the credibility of this study, Golden-Biddle and Locke's (1993) suggestions were followed to consider three dimensions of authenticity–plausibility–criticality to convince the reader of the credibility of the study. First, in terms of *authenticity*, it was acknowledged that, because of the limited time spent at fieldwork, it was not possible to attend all Buddhist-practicing/sharing or team-building events incorporating Buddhist practices of participants' organizations, so observations of important events may have been missed. Furthermore, though interviews were recorded and observation notes were taken, participants may have been misinterpreted. Therefore, when further clarification or explanation was needed in analysing the data, the participants were contacted to obtain authentic representation of the data. Likewise, the researcher's supervisors played a crucial role in critically assessing the process of building understanding and interpretations to avoid complacency. Second, reflecting on the *plausibility* of data analysis and interpretation included consideration of leader participants' background, the distinctive nature of the work in different industries, participants' preferences on particular Buddhist paths and practices, years of leadership, and length of Buddhist practice to examine Buddhist-enacted leadership approaches. Particular consideration was give to the role of institutional, cultural and social

constraints of the transitional context on leadership practices and adaptation. Lastly, **criticality** in analysing and demonstrating the findings to deliver a contribution to knowledge was also attended to. More specifically, assessment was made of the grand challenges within the Vietnamese transitional economy, social and moral issues, paradoxes and dilemmatic situational ethics that shape leadership responses, the enactment of Buddhist principles in leadership, employees' perceptions, to social responsibility and sustainability, and employees' concerns over leadership authenticity and identity.

Additionally, the deep immersion into context based on the grounded-theory analysis approach further supported validity for the study by developing plausible explanations of the reality (Dean et al., 2006), addressing generalizable elements subject to the interaction of certain influence in the specific context under study (Fleetwood, 2004). Moreover, contextual factors helped to review the items of Fry's spiritual leadership model when it is applied in a different, non-Western context like Vietnam. The triangulation of data from interviews, observations and documentation also contributed to the internal validity of the grounded-theory approach (Egri & Herman, 2000). Moving data analysis to higher levels of abstraction through selective coding also allowed discovery of metaphors that could reveal possible underlying influences on Buddhist-enacted leadership, contributing to the practical adequacy and plausibility of explanations through the resonance with reality.

5.6.2 Validity in contextualisation

In order to avoid the pitfalls of contextualization in research, such as over-simplifying in de-contextualising the individual, group or firm, misinterpreting the complexity of the underlying phenomena or the messy reality of contemporary life, and the invisibility of the researcher's bounded rationality (Rousseau & Fried, 2001), context was presented visibly and precisely in a way that it can enhance the knowledge of the reader rather than producing confusion. The following table (Table 5.3) illustrates the factors that were taken into consideration in contextualising the research.

Table 5. 3 *Contextualising Qualitative Inquiry*

Construct validity	<p>Do constructs of spiritual leadership like vision, altruistic love, faith, calling and membership mean the same thing in the Buddhist context of Vietnam compared to Fry's original theory?</p> <p>Are there more or less constructs identified in data collection compared to the original theory?</p> <p>Are the outcomes of the theory similar to the findings of other studies in other contexts?</p>
Points of view	<p>Are there any differences in practice and application by different leaders or managers?</p> <p>Which practice is more/less important for one leader compared to another?</p> <p>What are the different opinions on the outcomes of such practices?</p>
Representativeness	<p>Sample: leaders and managers from Buddhist-enacted organizations</p> <p>Means: qualitative methods such as interview, observation and internal documents</p> <p>Location: Vietnam</p> <p>Type of firm: small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in various industries</p> <p>Impact on interpretation: context-specific in terms of cultural norms, history, and Buddhist philosophical viewpoints</p>
Range restriction	<p>Behavioural constraints due to differences in personality, adaptation of practice and the number of years of practice by individual respondents</p> <p>Outcome constraints due to the differences in the nature of the organizations involved in the study</p>
Time	<p>Contemporary context of the research: increased competition, the pressure over short-term versus long-term objectives, and complex social concerns of a transitional economy</p>

Source: Adapted from Rousseau and Fried (2001)

5.6.3 Reliability and validity of quantitative inquiry

Section B served as a further exploratory part of the research with open-ended questions to verify and explore newly identified phenomena for future research. The research approaches Section B provided verification for the qualitative phase and provided further exploration of the emergent themes from employees' perspectives to maintain objectivity in the analysis.

The questionnaire was double-translated, from English to Vietnamese and back from Vietnamese to English, to make sure that the content of the two versions was mutually consistent. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 15 randomly chosen participants. Questions with poor consistency underwent translation again and were re-piloted to ensure the clarity of the questions for the respondents. The questionnaire was also pilot-tested on 15 respondents to detect possible deficiencies in its design and instructions. Issues such as clarity of the questions, the different instructions for each section, and the length of the survey were raised in the pilot stage but without any indications of major deficiencies.

In summary, this section highlights how the important validity, reliability and credibility issues in the study have been considered and addressed where needed. The following chapters describe in detail how the interpretation of findings reflect faithful and authentic representations of the data and how they contribute to the knowledge and insights of Buddhist-enacted leadership and issues of CSR and sustainability in the transitional context of Vietnam.

Chapter Six: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the results of the study. Qualitative data are first presented and examined to contextualise the spiritual leadership questionnaire for the quantitative phase, followed by results of the quantitative phase. After both qualitative and quantitative phases have been presented, a comprehensive and comparative analysis is presented to identify causal mechanism, contextual factors, relationships and significant outcomes from the data.

Part I – Qualitative Analysis

6.1. Analysis of Script A – Buddhist practitioners

This section presents and analyses the interview data from Script A. The dimensions (see Appendix A) are presented with respective themes and relevant evidence from the data. The data are presented based on selective codes after open coding, axial coding and selective coding using grounded theory and thematic analyses to identify the relationships between variables shaping Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership practices.

Twelve aggregate dimensions were identified from the data. The aggregate dimensions from selective codes represent the main constructs of the spiritual leadership model (vision, faith, altruistic love, meaning/calling, membership, inner life/mindfulness practice, and organizational outcomes) plus other dimensions shaped by the Buddhist worldview and practices (understanding Buddhism and spirituality, mission and purpose, and response to context). To arrive at aggregate dimensions, open coding was used to organize the data related to phenomena in a systematic way. Pattern and axial coding were used to generalise themes and identify causal mechanisms and processual elements of Buddhist-enacted leadership to link categories to the phenomena. Selective coding and code-weaving¹⁸ were then used for final data coding for an integrative picture of the story through the explanation of the context-based phenomena emerging and explanation of Buddhist-enacted leadership as part of the critical-realist approach to gain ‘practically adequate’ explanations of the context. Interpretation in the Script A analysis was based on the emerging first-order and second-order

¹⁸ Code-weaving is the integration of key code words and phrases into narrative form to see how the pieces weave together (Saldaña, 2016).

themes, with alternative explanations from the data, while initial comparisons with the literature were made for further discussion and critical review in the next chapter.

6.1.1 Respondents' understanding of Buddhism and spirituality

Respondents from Script A were all Buddhist practitioners at a high or the highest positions of their companies. Most of them had experience in different professional positions before taking up their leadership roles. Four respondents had more than 20 years of leadership experience and most of the remaining respondents had more than 10 years of experience. Six respondents had been practising Buddhism for more than 10 years, compared to the rest of respondents with less than 10 years of experience. Findings suggest that their attitudes towards practising Buddhism and applying Buddhism in leadership vary and depend on their years of experience and the context in which they involved themselves both at work and in daily life. On the other hand, most of the respondents perceived that Buddhism is not a religion, and the majority of respondents claimed that it is neither spirituality nor a religion but a way of life.

Contextual attitudes of Buddhist practices

Findings reveal that there are various attitudes on the application of Buddhist practices in the contemporary context of Vietnam. Such attitudes were determined by the length of Buddhist practice by respondents and by the nature of their work. Interestingly, a number of respondents had known Buddhism for a long period; however, they had only decided to bring Buddhism into practice in recent years: 'I have known Buddhism for 30 years, but have officially and seriously practised (*thực hành nghiêm túc*) it since 2010' (10A); 'I have been reading about Buddhism since 1983–1984, but I started practising it from 2005' (19A).

Most respondents had been practising Buddhism since 2010 (17). This reflects a spiritual movement in Vietnam in bringing Buddhism into contemporary applied and engaged practices. There were three main reasons why the pursuit of Buddhist practice has become significant recently in Vietnam. First, the commodification and misunderstanding of Buddhism have produced frustration among people, and they want to learn about the true nature of Buddhism (16A):

I wish to be able to introduce the value of Buddhism (*giá trị đạo Phật*) to more people to eradicate ignorance in practice. Superstitious beliefs (*mê tín dị đoan*) and burning

ritual objects, spirit money (*đốt vàng mã*) now are disaster in this country. These rituals are taking over the true nature of Buddhist practice. Buddhism has been commercialised (*thương mại hóa*) and it is being corrupted going against the purifying nature of Buddhism. There is no trust in the society so that people look for religion. (16A)

By referring to burning ritual objects, respondent 16A indicated how rituals like burning items made of cardboard or paper such as houses, cardboard-made symbols of house cleaners, money, iPhones and so on as ways of showing respect and consideration for ancestors have become part of the worshipping culture among Vietnamese people.

Second, some respondents find that Buddhism is particularly useful and adaptable to the nature of their work (22A):

I started to know Buddhism from the principle of causal effects (*nhân quả*). It well applies to my profession, which is law. Understanding causal effects helps me to have an objective observation of my cases, the contexts and the relationships within the contexts. It is very important for me as a corporate lawyer to find out the tricky layers of my business cases and to be able to consult my clients. It helps me to solve problems thoroughly (*triệt để*).

In this case, corporate law is a distinctive profession that requires the ability to carry out an objective and sophisticated analysis to deal with complex intentions and relationships. Understanding causal effects encourages the practitioner to seek the final, sometimes hidden, causes to get real answers and solve problems.

Lastly, the pressure of stress and competitive working environment encourages people to look for alternative practices to achieve balance in life (2A): ‘I felt pressure previously; however, now, I do not feel pressure anymore. Practising Buddhism gives peace of mind, thus I organize my work effectively. Having peace of mind leads to effectiveness.’ Respondents express that as leaders, they continuously face challenges in doing business in Vietnam. Therefore, many respondents feel that Buddhism and its principles help them to understand the underlying causes of problems or events and deal with them skilfully.

Due to different contexts of respondents and the nature of their work, their perceptions on Buddhist practices differ. Some find it easy (6), some find it difficult (3), and the rest find it both easy and difficult (15). Respondents who find Buddhist practice easy tend to consider it as a natural practice in life because they apply it daily, they live with it every single moment, and thus it becomes part of their daily life: ‘For me, I think it is simple. It is natural for me. It is an everyday practice’ (7A). Others who find it difficult to practise Buddhism mainly have concerns over the fact that Buddhism is a practice of self-transformation that encourages people to overcome their own natural desires or needs. Changes in habits can be extremely hard:

Our nature is greedy, selfish, lazy and fearful. You have to get rid of greediness and ignorance. Can you overcome your greediness? How can you be generous when you have nothing? You can always give away something. It depends on whether you want to or not. A smile, a hug, a compassionate view also expresses generosity. (12A)

Others feel it is challenging having to perceive things differently, including rejecting what they might have strongly believed in before coming to know and practise Buddhism:

When you transfer Buddhist philosophy into your life (*đưa đạo Phật vào cuộc sống*), you live with it every single second. It is difficult for those like me who was educated based on dialectical materialism (*duy vật biện chứng*). When we change to a spiritual way of living, it takes time to adapt and transform our mind, especially when you have previous scientific education. (10A).

Respondent 10A highlighted that, as a scientist educated to believe that reality and the material world exist independently from the mind or spirit, she found it challenging and even surprising to arrive at acknowledging how the universe is interconnected and empty at the same time. This reflects the fact that it is difficult enough to grasp the true meaning of Buddhism in text; it is far more challenging to bring it into practice.

Those who see Buddhist practices as both easy and difficult also share the above concerns. These respondents point out the importance of context and having appreciation of conditioned genesis, causal nexus, or, in other words, dependent arising (*tùy duyên – Pratītyasamutpāda*):

Practising Buddhism should be easy if you understand it in a right way. Otherwise, it can be challenging. People normally think that Buddhism is about letting go (*buông bỏ*) of many things, such as letting go of eating habits, styles of living, and so on. In such cases, it is very difficult to practise. The notion of non-attachment can be applied in various ways of life, in personal life as well as at work to reflect flexible and skilful approaches in life. Non-attachment does not mean that you are reluctant to everything around you. Instead, it shows appreciation to the depending arising nature of the universe, of how sentient beings are connected and dependent on each other and helps practitioners to flexibly attend to different characteristics of people and to contextual differences. (24A.)

Differences in professional backgrounds, length of Buddhist practice and the nature of work therefore play crucial roles in forming respondents' attitude towards practising Buddhism. Such differences continue to affect how respondents have various justifications on why they do not consider Buddhism a religion. The following part presents evidence on this matter.

Non-religions perception on Buddhism

When respondents were asked about being spiritual or religious, most respondents (17) claimed to be neither spiritual nor religious. The rest identified themselves as both spiritual and religious (2) or as spiritual (5). Most respondents who believe in the spiritual nature of Buddhism consider it as a faith, a belief in which they believe and which they pursue: 'I am spiritual. I understand it as a path to understand a faith and consider the values of that faith as a way of living' (8A). However, for respondents who assert that Buddhism is neither spirituality nor a religion, their Buddhist practice is not based on faith but on how Buddhism actually fits into life in a way that is useful and meaningful. First, Buddhism is perceived as reasonable with logical principles that help to explain causal relationships or to solve problems. For them, Buddhism is like a life philosophy (10A), a science (20A), or a way of living (24A). Respondents found it relevant, practical and applicable to their everyday life. It is not something mystical based on blind faith but a useful means to help practitioners understand themselves and the world they live in. Second, Buddhism offers practice for self-transformation to the practitioner by understanding their inner self:

Buddhism for me is not a religion. It is an analytical tool or methodology of life. The Buddha himself followed dialectical materialism understanding and knowledge, not

just merely spirituality. I see Buddhism from a psychological viewpoint and dialectical materialism. For example, I feel very excited when modern physicians based their research on Buddhist philosophy to propose new directions for research, like holography. The Buddha used to say that when you look into your inner self (*nhìn vào bên trong*), you can understand the outside world (*thế giới bên ngoài*). Every single change has to start from ourselves. (5A)

These findings also revealed respondents' right understanding of Buddhism as being a useful tool to apply in life without dogmas, rituals or as a personal deity. Like dialectical materialism, Buddhism sees all sentient beings of the world in the relation to each other and in a dynamic, evolutionary environment rather than as static states. It is evident from the data that respondents have individual and contextual perceptions and preferences on Buddhist practices, however, they share the same understanding and realization on the nature of Buddhism as a way of thinking rather than a religion. For that reason, most Buddhist-enacted participants do not consider their Buddhist practice as either spiritual or religious.

6.1.2 Faith evolving from Buddhist practice and understanding

Based on respondents' understanding of Buddhism in general as presented in the previous part, they demonstrate further faith in Buddhist practices by showing positive responses and openness in applying Buddhist principles in life and at work. Their appreciation towards such principles have positive impact on leadership perception.

Positive response to applicable Buddhist principles in life and at work

The interview data show that respondents highly appreciated the positive impact and applicability of some Buddhist principles in their everyday life and at work. They identified various Buddhist principles that they consider effective and important in their application. All the Buddhist principles that have been pointed out by respondents can be categorised into three main classifications of Buddhist principles: (i) basic principles: impermanence (*vô thường*), depending arising (*duyên khởi*) and causal effect (*nhân quả*); (ii) the Noble Eightfold Path (*Bát Chánh Đạo*) as resolution from the Four Noble Truths (*Tứ Diệu Đế*); and (iii) the theory of emptiness (*tính không*) and non-self (*vô ngã*).

(i) Basic principles: impermanence (*vô thường*), depending arising (*duyên khởi*) and causal effect (*nhân quả*).

Respondents felt that basic Buddhist principles were particularly useful for them to understand the universe and apply in their everyday life. The most applied and appreciated principle is *causal effect* (13). Understanding causal effect, according to respondent 21A, helps to raise awareness of actions and behaviours. People tend to be more aware of their actions knowing that everything has its consequences:

I think the basic fundamental principle of Buddhism is causal effect. If we do something bad or even just have a bad thought (*khởi niệm*) in our mind, we should understand that it has consequences. Thus, causal effect is the key to everything else that helps people to transform and change to a positive mind.

This faith stimulates a perception concerning sustainability that will be described in more depth later. Others felt that causal effect is a tool or methodology that encourages people to look at causes of problems and solve them, which is very useful in professions like law.

Besides the principles of causal effect, respondents (7) saw that *impermanence* (*vô thường*) is another fundamental aspect of the universe. Failing to recognise impermanence can lead to dissatisfaction and ignorance by questioning unexpected results rather than accepting them and trying to improve them. Respondent 24A shared that:

When you live in this life, do not think that you can be satisfied because life is impermanent (*vô thường*). Suffering here is not a negative way of thinking. It is just a result of lack of wisdom [...] Understanding that everything can happen, I have been able to control myself better in unexpected or unwanted situations. Business does not always run as we want and employees quit jobs. If we do not understand impermanence, we will consider every problem that we face as abnormal or unexpected. If we understand impermanence, we will find it normal and we will focus on solving problems rather than questioning them.

The following quote of Milarepa – a famous Tibetan yogi and poet introduced by respondent 16A – demonstrates impermanence further:

Milarepa has a famous poem: ‘Planning for the future is like going fishing in a dry gulch; nothing ever works out as you wanted, so give up all your schemes and

ambitions. If you have got to think about something – make it the uncertainty of the hour of your death’. Everything has its natural movement. Understanding that makes life simple. (16A)

A number of respondents (4) also felt that having the right knowledge of the principles of depending arising (*lý duyên khởi*), the external universe, context, inner perception and understanding promotes healthy, united and harmonised relationships and proper business direction: ‘Whether a company can sustain or not, it depends on employees. Leadership is important, but employees are important as well. If a strategy is without available human resources to execute, it cannot be done. It depends on the “healthy” workforce. By healthy here, I mean healthy physically and psychologically’ (1A). Understanding depending arising lets leaders value and appreciate their followers.

(ii) The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path

By recognising the truths of suffering caused by greed–hatred–ignorance (*tham-sân-si*) in the Four Noble Truths (*Tứ Diệu Đế*), respondents developed their own contextually relevant preferences to various resolutions and Buddhist principles from the Noble Eightfold Path (*Bát Chánh Đạo*) to eradicate causes of suffering. The Buddhist principles that they identified and apply can be grouped into three main categories: the Middle Way (*Trung Đạo*); Sila – Samadhi – Prajna (*Giới – Định – Huệ*); and Truthfulness (*Chân*) – Compassion (*Bi*) – Forbearance (*Nhẫn*).

First, most respondents (19) understood the nature of suffering and its causes. They were aware that greed–hatred–ignorance (*tham-sân-si*) is part of and present in everyday life. It takes time, persistence, and transformation to overcome them. Their view is consistent with what the Buddhist literature calls ‘the three poisons’ (Flanagan, 2011; Mendis, 1994), for example:

Actually, we have three obstacles in life: greed, hatred and ignorance (*tham, sân, si*). We are greedy in Buddhist practices, in fame and even greedy to have freedom. It is a long practicing path day-by-day. First, you give a book to people you like. You may not prefer to give it to people who you dislike even though they might need that book more. Hatred is dissatisfaction. How many dissatisfactions do you have every day? However, if you understand cause–effect and its logic, nothing comes by accident.

Dissatisfaction is our reaction to our own preference. If you have knowledge about it, you will not have hatred. Therefore, all suffering begins with ignorance. Since our birth, we all have a similar and common denominator, which is ignorance. We are only different in numerator of our levels of ignorance. Buddhism helps people to get out of illusions in life. We need to transform our troubled mind to a pure mind. The fundamental of it is wisdom. (12A)

Respondents all agreed that the Noble Eightfold Path provides helpful direction and principles for good living and alleviating suffering. Many respondents (9) found that the concepts and principles of *Sila* (conduct), *Samadhi* (concentration), and *Prajna* (wisdom), namely right action, right concentration, and wisdom are useful in application and practice. They transfer these and apply them skilfully at work:

In reality, Buddhism can be applied as *Định – Samadhi* (concentration), *Huệ – Prajna* (wisdom), and *Giới – Sila* (conduct). Concentration here is specificity, wisdom here is clarity and conduct here is order. Order here applies to everything around us. The Buddha teaches us that when our heart is within its right order, the world itself is in order, too. When you do business, you have to follow regulations of the law, taking into consideration employees' expectations to pursue sustainability. (7A).

Respondents (10) also acknowledged the importance of being mindful about thoughts (*khôỉ niệm*), actions, appreciating honesty (*tính trung thực*) and vulgar speech, stating that all actions have their causal effect (*nhân quả*) and karma (*nghiệp*). Respondent 5A provided his real life experience in business:

For example, honesty (*tính trung thực*) has its causal effect. My competitors sometimes promote untrue or false information to create competition. Eventually, when consumers acknowledge this false information, they return to us. It becomes our advantage. That is for me, causal effect. It happened to me quite a number of times.

Another important Buddhist principle that respondents (8) brought into consideration developed from the Noble Eightfold Path is the Middle Way or the Middle Path (*Trung Đạo*) – the ability to be balanced and to be moderate (Payutto, 1994). According to respondents, balance and moderation refer to equality and the acknowledgment of limitations in personal

preference or greed. Such moderation, for example, is reflected in respondents' financial sacrifice for sustainable long-term purposes:

The outcome of the business is no longer my ultimate concern. What is more important for me is whether employees working at my chain of restaurants are happy or not. Maybe the profit we have is lower than what we used to have, but in terms of people, we are happier. I think it is fair, the result will eventually reflect your purpose. (20A)

And in negotiating with partners: 'When I negotiate with partners, I put their benefits above mine. In communication, I try to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings. I think it is important to show moderate attitudes and respect for your business partners for long-term partnerships' (16A).

Understanding basic Buddhist principles helped participants to have an objective view of the universe, context and relationships. All aspects of life are interconnected as described by respondent 16A: 'Money is just a means. Water is also a means for us to exist. Life has giving and taking. We cannot just take from others' (16A).

(iii) Non-self and emptiness

Non-self and emptiness, although perceived as very difficult concepts, were considered by respondents as two of the most important principles and Buddhist outcomes to pursue. These two Buddhist concepts highlight the importance of non-attachment (*không bám chấp*) in Buddhist practices that will be reflected back again by respondents in leadership application and practices. Emptiness is claimed to be far more difficult in practice than in text:

Emptiness (*tính không*) is a very hard concept. Even the English version cannot fully express the original meaning of 'sunyata'. The state of emptiness is actually the state of wisdom. In that 'emptiness', there is everything. Without experience of practice, it is only a concept. It requires hard practice. You cannot understand this concept through language or description; even the English version of it is too far away from its true meaning. (12A).

Many respondents (10) were trying to practise 'emptiness' in life and at work; however, for many of them, they still had a long way to go to fully understand its meaning in practice. In

understanding ‘emptiness’, one needs to practise non-self, which is extremely hard in practice but can be achieved through systematic daily application at work:

Non-self is the first principle that needs to be understood. The utmost purpose of human eventually is happiness. In Buddhism, happiness is without conditions. At work even in managing or leading positions, I listen to people’s ideas and share it with others rather than imposing on my own. In relationships, I aim at equality. If we do not have a self in our mind, it seems to me that we can be happier. Happiness is not the destination, even along the path of practice, you can feel happiness. (18A)

Practising Buddhism requires the context of normal daily life. Ironically, it is also the hardest and most challenging part of engaged Buddhism:

Practising Buddhism is about combining Buddhism and life as one. Venerable Thich Hue Dang used to say that ‘How can we improve ourselves if we live a life without a spiritual belief or Buddhism?’ But without the context of life, there is no room for spirituality or Buddhism to be practised and no context and opportunities for individuals to improve (*Đời không đạo lấy gì mà sửa,? Đạo không đời biết sửa với ai?*). They need to be incorporated. (1A)

As stated by respondent 1A, the practice of Buddhism is the process of self-transformation, in which the context and its dynamic feature are crucial conditions for individuals to learn, improve and adapt.

Positive impact of Buddhism on leadership perception

Based on interview respondents’ faith in Buddhist principles and practices and their understanding and perceptions in general of the value of and need for Buddhism in life, respondents displayed positive and distinctive views of leadership. Their perceptions on leadership and leadership roles from a Buddhist perspective were based on two main characteristics: (i) self-transformation; and (ii) the promotion of supportive working environment.

(i) Self-transformation

Respondents (24) claimed that Buddhism creates leadership transformation. Practising Buddhism does not just encourage respondents to have a change of mind or perception on

various truths in life; it does actually transform their ways of looking at leadership. From personal transformation, Buddhism leads to organizational changes:

It changes my way of living and it changes my company indirectly. I do not apply Buddhism directly at work. I do not propagandise Buddhism in my company; I apply it to change myself. How much I can change myself will indirectly affect the way I lead my company. (24A)

This comment illustrates a very important nature of Buddhist practice – it is a personalised and contextual practice, which reflects personal choice subject to contextually favourable conditions. As such, no Buddhist application and no self-transformation is the same for different practitioners. It depends on the context, the practitioners' personal characteristics, working environment and industry. With the right choice of practice and application, Buddhist practice can create positive personal and inner transformation, resulting in an attitude of virtuous conduct, a psychologically more stable and balanced personality, and the ability to be contextually flexible to execute proper and skilful leadership in decision-making:

Buddhist application is very important for a leader's attitude. If you do not have a fair and equal attitude, patience and sacrifice for others, you can easily fall into the trap of your own 'ego', which can lead to inappropriate decision-making, unsatisfied subordinates and ineffective organizational outcome. (2A)

Other than self-transformation, Buddhism stimulates perceptual changes towards the nature of workplace environment. It is apparent from the data that creating a healthier and supportive working environment is considered important in respondents' roles as leaders as a part of their Buddhist practice.

(ii) Supportive working environment

Respondents (18) felt that Buddhism enhances their generosity and their appreciation of the working environment. They show benevolence, lovingkindness and compassion through 'a community-centred mind and heart in personal or corporate life' (1A). Respondent 16A further clarified how important it is for a leader and Buddhist practitioner to foster a supportive working environment:

As a Buddhist practitioner, how well you can practise Buddhism does not just depend on how you can improve yourself through understanding the basic principles and

levels of truths in life. It is also about how you can help others. To be honest, that is the main purpose to practise concepts of non-self, compassion or understanding depending arising. As a leader, it is not just about how good or profitable your business is. More importantly, it is more important to know how happy your employees are when they work with you. Am I a good and supportive leader? Am I creating learning opportunities for my employees to advance in their career? Those are the questions I still ask myself before I make decisions.

This attitude significantly has impact on building vision, mission, altruistic love, belongingness, calling, membership and organizational outcomes.

6.1.3 Leadership vision

Respondents' understanding of Buddhism and the faith they have built up has led to their expressions of distinctive leadership vision. To elaborate and analyse such vision comprehensively, respondents' general vision of life and their organization is first unpacked to elucidate their formation of leadership vision.

Positive life vision

Most respondents (21) highlighted how Buddhism gives meaning and explanation to life through causal effects, impermanence and depending arising. These principles are key to responding to suffering and forming respondents' visions on life. Respondents' life visions were developed from their understanding and perception of suffering. Respondent 24A summarised the state of suffering as two main types – internal and external:

Suffering (*khổ*) has two types. The externally caused suffering, which is caused by impermanence like a change in the weather, can make you sick. It cannot be avoided. The second type of suffering is caused internally, because of ignorance. When we see the bad weather, we will not understand it is impermanent (*vô thường*) and we suffer from it. Unlike the externally caused suffering, internal suffering can be solved. It needs wisdom. (24A)

According to all respondents, suffering is the result of ignorance and perception. Ignorance prevents people from distinguishing between what needs to be accepted (external conditions that are outside of human control) and personal perception, which can be improved and

solved by attaining wisdom. This process is by no means easy: it reflects the process of transformation in perception and wisdom.

However, respondents (15) who experienced it in their leadership role found this process beneficial. Respondents found that Buddhism provided them with sufficient reasoning to have a thorough view of life. Whether there is suffering depends on individual perception: ‘Our body can be hurt physically, but the state of suffering is identified by our mind and heart. We can control our perception (*nhận thức*)’ (18A); ‘There are people who are living in hardship. We might think that they are suffering, but they might not feel the same because they are used to that particular condition of life’ (16A).

Suffering itself is therefore a contextual phenomenon. Suffering is a state of perception based on individual differences and wisdom. It is a relative rather than absolute term. For example, respondents (4) in the service industries having to face challenges in taming their ‘ego’ or ‘self’ (*kiềm chế ‘cái tôi’*) to remain calm in dealing with customers, or in businesses, where leaders have to be involved in ‘lobbying’ authorities, face dilemmas between wrong and right doing concerning corruption. In some cases with the right understanding and wisdom, suffering can even be a turning point and an opportunity for an individual to transform and learn:

When people suffer and they cannot get rid of suffering by themselves, they suffer from it. However, when we feel suffering and we intentionally try to learn from it to obtain skills to overcome such states, it is not suffering anymore. It becomes a road towards happiness and peace. Suffering is a challenge and an opportunity for us to fulfil and complete ourselves. (7A)

A number of respondents (6) shared that they had learnt to say ‘no’ to lobbying activities, with peace of mind, even if it meant, for example, having to compromise their organizations’ construction projects. They had opened up to other options and become more creative and skilful in dealing with tricky business situations.

Based on such a viewpoint, most respondents (20) demonstrated a positive life vision. They looked at life positively and considered life as an important context for self-development:

With Buddhist practice, I understand that life is simple. It has two truths: the worldly conventional truth (*sự thật tương đối*) and the ultimate truth (*sự thật tuyệt đối*). Happiness and suffering both exists, with the right attitude, there is neither. Happiness depends on how you perceive it yourself. (15A)

A positive life vision signals the reason why respondents felt that life is a supporting condition to practise Buddhism. Contextual challenges foster individual learning, changes in perception (such as how respondent 15A explained it), which is part of self-transformation. Life itself and its contextual relationships are reflections of Buddhist basic principles. Buddhism is a context-dependent practice that activates and requires contextually skilful and flexible practices based on the right understanding and wisdom. This encourages flexibility in life and at work. However, flexibility and impermanence do not necessarily imply unsustainability:

My perception on non-self (*vô ngã*), impermanence (*vô thường*) and related practices are sustainable, however, I am very flexible in a role as a leader. At the end of the road all Buddhist principles teaches you about the truths and flexibility to attend to realities in life. (18A)

Contextual flexibility here reaffirms the importance of context in prioritising the type of sustainability that a business should follow. For example, the nature of the business can influence a company's choice in pursuing financial, social or environmental sustainability. In education and medicine, social sustainability, educational values and humanity are more important than other types: 'We want the next generation to continue to promote our company's vision for sustainable development. As a pharmaceutical company, medical etiquette (*y đức*) is crucial in providing and distributing pharmaceutical products' (2A).

In the printing and transportation industries, more attention is paid to environmental sustainability:

For example, in the printing industry, there is always waste. We do have a very effective industrial waste handling technology. In terms of the paper we use, normally it is the choice of the customers, but I always suggest recyclable materials for them to choose from. Our company depends on the customer, but we do encourage them to use environmentally friendly materials. (1A)

Another respondent felt that financial sustainability is the basis and means for all other types of sustainability: ‘If we have no profit, how can we help others in the society or do charities? There would be no meaning contributing to either the environment or the society’ (5A). The nature of work therefore has a contextual impact on how respondents perceive their purpose and life vision.

Positive organizational vision

A positive life vision can lead to a positive organizational vision aiming at bringing social values and sustainable development to an organization:

I work in the education industry. I was very lucky to receive various scholarships during my studies. I want to help the young generation to have the opportunity to develop themselves. If you ask me what I consider success in life, my answer is: I feel fulfilled when I can help the misfortunate (*kém may mắn*) and disadvantaged students to be successful in life. That is also our company’s vision. (10A)

My company’s vision is to achieve sustainable development. Companies pursue development but I want sustainable development. Every brick I build, I want it to be strong and steady. I use my mind and heart to pursue a sustainable business; however, I am also not attached to or try to pursue such goals at any price. (3A)

It is evident from the above representative respondents that they bring a number of Buddhist principles into cultivating their vision. For example, they understood that greed is part of suffering, thus they put more effort into sustainable development, which represents understanding of impermanence, causal effect, qualities of forbearance and wisdom. Another point worth noticing is that they showed clear orientation towards social values in the community. This reflects lovingkindness, compassion and generosity, as mentioned by respondents in demonstrating their faith in Buddhism.

Perception of leadership vision

Earlier it was reported how respondents’ faith evolved from Buddhist principles and their perception of the importance and relevance of Buddhism to leadership roles. The interviews revealed respondents’ view of their roles as leaders and how Buddhism influences their visions in practice.

(i) Developing people through guidance and knowledge transfer

In a number of respondents' view (12), leadership is about guiding others and the willingness and ability to transfer skills to followers based on Buddhist principles of generosity: 'Leaders should be able to coach others. Coaching here does not mean that leaders are better than employees; rather it means that we create opportunities for employees to develop themselves and practise it, giving them advice and working opportunities' (18A). The synchronization of leadership perceptions of knowledge sharing and the Buddhist principle of generosity triggers positive leadership visions.

(ii) Adopting personal and positional power – 'soft' and 'hard' skills – in a non-coercive way
Respondents (5) believed that for a leader there should be a balance between positional and personal power, between soft and hard skills. Such balance creates a non-coercive and meaningful influence. Leaders need skills and personal capability to maintain and even develop their influence:

Everybody has the ability to lead if you know how to sacrifice your 'ego' (*cái tôi*) and put the common interest (*lợi ích chung*) of others ahead. Every other soft leadership skill can be learnt easily except from this leadership trait. It takes practice. (2A)

Here, respondent 2A re-emphasised the importance of the concept of non-self. By stating that this particular skill cannot be learned, respondent 2A indicated the importance of long-term practice involved in the process of self-transformation, involving practising non-self on the job rather than a skill that can be learnt merely in some courses. On the other hand, having proficiency and professional knowledge does not guarantee successful leadership. They need to be combined with skilful application of soft skills in understanding and appreciating the people around one, including understanding leaders' own inner selves and shortcomings:

Leaders need three things: mind and heart (*tâm*); knowledge and wisdom (*trí*); and their influence. Do not think too much of yourself. Your employees are not in your possession. Do not abuse your power to make others do anything you want. That is how you apply your mind and heart into leadership. You have to look at the big picture, look further and beyond and look for the benefits of others; being skilful in accessing and absorbing social information is how you show your influence.

Knowledge and wisdom here applies to how you handle contextual situations. Those are the three most important things for leadership. (16A)

Clearly, respondents were aware of the power and intellectuality that they possess. However, they are also aware that leadership is not about controlling and it should be non-coercive: ‘We cannot control the world in Buddhism. In the company, I do not control people’ (24A).

Such attitudes indicated how well Buddhist principles of compassion and non-violence (do no harm to others) were applied in generating respondents’ vision of leadership. Leadership is not about one’s ‘self’, and business is not just about making profit. This spirit was clearly shown in respondent 1A’s opinion, reflecting her effort in contributing to the younger generation rather than promoting personal and organizational interest:

Our products and services are delivered with their best quality with an affordable price [...] when we print magazines for pupils and juniors, if we do not print it with a good quality, it can affect children’s eyes and visual ability. However, if we print it with a high price to keep the quality, they cannot afford it. Therefore, I always aim at choosing the type of paper that is clear enough for children to read to avoid short-sightedness for them, but it also has a reasonable and affordable price. To increase the knowledge of children for example – that is the heart of our business. (1A)

(iii) Managing desires and temptations through vision

Respondents (11) agreed that good leadership has to start with a good vision for the benefit of the organization. However, responses highlighted that, by applying Buddhism in vision, they were well aware of the necessity to manage desires and temptations in creating and implementing their visions:

Leadership is the ability to have vision without personal temptations, assertiveness and directions for the common good. If you just run business to make profits without considering its karmic consequences, you cannot deliver a sustainable business. Too much desires and temptations lead to suffering. (6A)

Here the principle of the Middle Path in articulating moderation and balance in leadership vision is expressed. Moderating desires is important to foster long-term sustainable business

rather than pursuing short-term profits at any costs, which may eventually lead to karmic consequences.

(iv) Leading by example

For effective leadership, respondents (13) found that leading by example was very useful in their leadership roles. To be able to lead by example, respondents indicated that they applied the principle of non-attachment. This meant that as leaders they were also prepared to act as managers, executing tasks to directly show and guide employees. It is not until they can do everything themselves that they can be an example to others.

A leader should be an example. You should also have the ability of a middle manager. Whenever you need to be a manager, you should be able to do that. Whenever you need to be an employee, you should also be able to do it. The Buddha taught that: 'Monks, don't teach others the things that you have not done.' (7A)

Overall, leadership vision is demonstrated through respondents' contextual perception and application of Buddhist principles and practices. Enacting Buddhism in leadership vision shows the salient role of context, Buddhist principles of non-self, and compassion.

6.1.4 Leadership mission and purpose

Apart from leadership vision, Buddhism influences respondents' purpose and their organizational mission. To unpack this in a multi-faceted manner, respondents' personal purpose, organizational purpose, spiritual purpose, the application of dynamic means for purposes and organizational mission are explicated.

Positive personal purpose

Respondents (9) expressed enlightened life purposes in pursuing social and personal psychological well-being through being supportive to the community, pursuing happiness in life, and developing wisdom. One of the major personal purposes of respondents as Buddhist practitioners was to contribute to the community. Respondents expressed that they were socially oriented. Part of their life purpose is to contribute to the well-being of the community.

Practising Buddhism has changed my personality, habits and purpose. I used to have a very introverted personality, hardly ever shared anything with others, not mentioning

to my employees. When I started practising Buddhism, I changed myself because part of the Buddhist practice is to help others. I have overcome my habits, started networking and built up Buddhist communities to help others. I have found the most meaningful purpose of life. (23A)

Happiness is another aspect that they considered as life purpose. Happiness for Buddhist practitioners is achieved through peace of mind. Respondents (8) demonstrated the need for both physical and psychological well-being. Such needs stimulate their leadership orientation towards employees.

Happiness is important in life. Whatever you do in life, it all comes back to happiness. I found happiness by being surrounded with family and friends who unconditionally support me psychologically and by living a healthy physical life free of worries. (22A)

Lastly, some respondents also conveyed their life pursuits in wisdom articulation and knowledge inquiry, especially in understanding, practising and applying Buddhism in life.

My purpose of life is to gain wisdom because only when you have the knowledge, the understanding of the universe, only then you can understand yourself, your actions and verify whether your actions are right or wrong. For me, knowing when you are right and wrong make a huge difference in how you had lived, are living and will be living your life. (19A)

These personal pursuits reveal positive attitudes and aims in life that correlates well with respondents' personal visions and the context of Vietnam.

Positive organizational purpose

Respondents' organizational purposes resemble what they considered as their personal purpose. It is evident from the interview data that respondents' personal and organizational purposes overlap in their motivation to support the community. Aiming at sustainability and people development in their organizational purposes is one way of disseminating their purpose to achieve happiness and wisdom in life. For example, respondent 16A believed that bringing advanced technologies for water solutions through their project in Vietnam would

contribute to a healthier and happier life for the community and at the same time help people to develop skills and knowledge.

We have introduced German technology for water solutions in many provinces. It was well received by the local people because they have learnt new technologies that they can apply for their farming and at the same time they are more aware of the importance of the quality of water for their quality of life in the long-term.

Other than that, respondent 3A held the view that helping people to develop by themselves psychologically and physically through Buddhist philosophies would incorporate personal and organizational purposes in acquiring wisdom and well-being in life.

What I personally feel useful may not be useful for other people. However, I never hesitated to introduce what I think can help employees' professional development and well-being, even if it means that they may not receive it well in the first place, such as how I introduced meditation training sessions. I think that my Buddhist practice has become stronger when I was able to share my personal purpose with my people in my organization.

Thus, individual purpose was no doubt an influential motivator for organizational purposes.

Spiritual purpose

Most respondents' spiritual purpose was aimed at helping others, sharing Buddhist practices, and developing wisdom, for example: 'Along my spiritual pursuit, I want to find the bodhisattva (*tánh Phật*) in myself, and help as many people as I can on this path. I have no specific business purposes in my life; it is up to context itself. I will try to do my best in the given context' (18A). Many of them (15) considered that peace, freedom, and enlightenment are spiritual purposes to invigorate their personal purpose in attaining happiness in life. There was an interesting comment by respondent 1A on Buddhism and purpose. In elaborating respondents' faith in Buddhism, respondents claimed that non-attachment is an important principle. However, respondent 1A highlighted the importance of righteous application, even in understanding and pursuing spiritual purposes.

Sometimes, those who practise Buddhism may say they are not in need of anything. It is not entirely true. There should be expectations and purposes; however, we should

not be attached (*mắc kẹt*) to them. Everything in life needs a purpose for success, including practising Buddhism. (1A)

Dynamic means for purposes

When respondents were asked what specific means they needed to fulfil individual, organizational, and spiritual purposes, they expressed various alternatives and means. However, all responses can be categorised as internal capability, external capability, and other means such as financial capability, information, or spiritual faith. Among all the means mentioned, internal capability was strongly emphasised by the majority of respondents (9). In pursuing the identified purposes, respondents needed supporting external conditions, such as the community and contextual opportunities (*có duyên*). Some of them, like respondent 4A, highlighted that, for her job, support from the community and from people involved with her job, was significant:

I need a community around me. It is impossible for one person to do everything. I need a support of a group of people. For example, I wish to build up a standardisation programme for teaching English for children and adults in Vietnam in the public school systems to enhance English teaching. To be able to do that, I need a support group.

Whether an external context is favourable or not, it depends on the ability of the individual to seize an opportunity. The concept of depending arising in Buddhism referred to by a respondent below highlights the effectiveness of this concept in practice.

The means (*các phương tiện*) I need depends on the context (*tùy duyên*). Whichever available means I have, I will use them whenever I need to. If I have 1 billion VND I will do business with that 1 billion. If I have a hundred thousand, I do business with that hundred thousand, or if I have ten thousand, I do business with that ten thousand as well. The business I have today started from scratch. I borrowed money to make my own business and along the way, I used every means I came across to develop my business from printing services to manufacturing. I then started printing books and along with the development of technology, I explored e-books businesses as well. Now I have printing services not only within Vietnam but also in other countries. My business development is accompanied by favourable conditions and the different contextual opportunities that came along. (7A)

Respondents particularly drew attention to the importance of internal capability to pursue the purposes mentioned. Here they re-emphasised a number of Buddhist principles, like forbearance and compassion together with leading by example and emotional intelligence, as important means to undertake their pursuits. Respondents shared that to achieve their positive and socially oriented pursuits, especially to be able to help and develop people, leading by example was important in being involved directly and practically with employees and sharing knowledge with them where appropriate. Leading by example also provided opportunity for respondents to understand the context which employees were experiencing, thus enhancing personal wisdom and employee development.

Respondents (22) expressed that practising Buddhism requires a long-term and persistent commitment since it is a self-transformation practice and probably the most difficult practice that challenges natural human habits. Hence, forbearance (*nhẫn*) and compassion (*bi*) are essential qualities both to practise Buddhism and to pursue purposes. In daily life, for example: ‘Laziness in practising meditation in early morning can make you ineffective at work or have long-term impact on health. I need to win over my own self’ (2A). In leadership positions: ‘We should not give up on pursuing a difficult but meaningful project or coaching a stubborn but talented subordinate’ (4A). Furthermore, for self-transformation, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role: ‘At work, I need to keep my emotions stable to handle complex situations effectively’ (2A).

On the other hand, respondents also highlighted other means. Respondent 1A mentioned financial capability: ‘There are many important means like financial capability’; information: ‘information is a means to influence others’; and spiritual faith: ‘We also need spiritual support to have faith in what we do. For example, I wish I do not make mistakes in my medical practice, however sometimes it is inevitable. I need spiritual faith to support and encourage myself’ (6A).

The means that respondents identified various Buddhist principles that they mentioned in earlier parts of the analysis, especially in elaborating which principles had shaped their faith towards Buddhism. There is therefore a strong and influential relationship among faith, vision, and purpose.

Positive organizational mission

The majority (17) of respondents' organizational missions were to serve the community, which overlaps with what they gave prominence to in their individual, organizational and spiritual purposes. For example, respondent 16A shared his organizational mission in improving Vietnam's water capability:

Our mission is to improve Vietnam's water capability in water management technology and social responsibility. Water is a natural resource, it is limited and it has a natural circuit. If we use it effectively, there will be less pollution. Water has powerful impact on the land. Without water, we will need more electricity from oil, gas, which can lead to pollution. We try to persuade the Vietnamese government to have more effective policies; for example, the 80th decree on imposing fee on water waste. With such policies, water companies will have fees to reinvest for the benefit of the community. We try to teach people to use water efficiently and effectively to reduce environmental pollution. (16A)

Other respondents' missions aimed at customer satisfaction: 'Our mission is to deliver valuable services to customers and enhance managerial capabilities of SMEs' (5A).

It was apparent that the overall implication of such missions was the benefit of the community, such as providing valuable services, helping SMEs' capabilities and improving employees' standard living by increasing basic salary. Thus Buddhism has positive implications on respondents' purpose and mission.

6.1.5 Understanding meaning and values in life and at work

With positive vision, purpose and mission identified earlier, most respondents (19) indicated that they found their work meaningful compared to those who still had some hesitation about their work (3). By unpacking what respondents' perception on meaningfulness and values were, this part seeks to explain how they actually created meaningfulness at work by applying Buddhist principles.

Understanding work meaning and meaningfulness at work

The majority of respondents (14) shared that they enjoyed their work because it gave them opportunities and favourable conditions to be able to help others and to gain experience in

Buddhist practice. Respondents reaffirmed that context was a crucial part in practising Buddhism, especially when it was about self-transformation. Therefore, they considered the nature and challenges of their work as complimentary conditions: ‘My work is meaningful because I can learn a lot from it. Work situations help me to reflect back upon my ego to control myself. Conflicts, for example, are a good environment for me to adjust myself’ (18A).

However, a few respondents (3) still had concerns and hesitation towards their work. For example, respondent 21A considered her work only as a means to provide financial security; respondent 18A did not appreciate the ‘relationship-oriented’ nature of the work that requires ‘lobbying’; and respondent 23A did not feel fulfilled with part of her work because she realised the causal effects and possible karma (*nghiệp*) associated with it:

I am not that satisfied with the job that I am doing now. Because the more we build new houses, the more land we take. It also means that we take away the means to earn living for farmers. If I can choose a job that I can bring all benefit to people, I would have liked it more. However, there are still aspects of my job that I like and try to bring the best product and service we can for people. Practising Buddhism in a contemporary context does not mean that you choose the most suitable place to close your eyes and meditate; it is about willingness to deal with challenges and learn from it to complete yourself. (23A)

These challenges at work and their contexts tested respondents’ Buddhist practices in actual real-life situations, confirming the challenging nature of Buddhist practice in contemporary contexts.

Life and employee values in life and at work

With regard to respondents’ understanding of work meaningfulness, they considered life and employee values at work to be important. The life values that respondents appreciated reflected back upon their faith and vision. For example, spiritual belief leads to positive thinking. However, the most important value in life was wisdom, to make wise decisions and observations rather than blind ones in life, as highlighted by respondent 23A:

Spiritual value (*giá trị tâm linh*) is much more important than tangible values. However, they are interconnected. I think being able to have both is important. For

example, you want to practise a spiritual value or have some peace around you but you do not have financial means to achieve what you want. You are suffering from a disease and have no money for treatment. In such cases, aiming at spiritual values has no meaning.

The interview data show that respondents incorporated Buddhist principles in forming their life vision. For instance, respondents highlighted the impact of the Middle Way in attaining balance in life (1A) and awareness of causal effect (8A). Particularly, respondents mentioned the importance of being skilful in various contexts and adapting effectively in different settings. These values fit well in the context of Vietnam, where certain skills are needed to tackle sensitive issues of corruption and institutionalised social evils within society. More importantly, not being trapped by, or attracted or attached to, such negative agendas in their roles as leaders required strong will embedded in wisdom.

I regularly deal with corrupted officials to launch new medical projects for patients. You cannot just escape from it when the whole system is suffering from institutionalised corruption. I do what I can, sometimes it is not the best solution or outcome I would have expected, which involves compromising or sacrificing some personal values and codes of conduct that I appreciate for the common good and benefits of patients. (2A)

The impact of Buddhist principles and faith influenced respondents' views on the values that employees should have or need at the work place. What respondents considered necessary as life values, they also expected in their employees, such as ethical behaviour, honesty and lovingkindness. In valuing freedom themselves, respondents also allowed independence and freedom at work for their employees through self-management and self-involvement, as suggested by respondent 19A:

I am almost absent at my company. I travel a lot. For example, in June and July I was in Europe. In August, I was in Beijing, and in September, I was in Germany for one month. Next month, I will travel abroad as well. Good leadership is about encouraging self-management, self-involvement at work. In the job interview, I ask my employees about their purpose of joining our company. If they are passionate about books, I tell them this is the right place for you. I also provide everything I can so they can develop their passion here.

With the belief that the articulation of wisdom is needed for self-development and especially for Buddhist practice, respondents encouraged knowledge sharing among their employees. It is notable that life values and values that respondents promoted at work through their employees were identical. The next section investigates how respondents created meaningfulness through work and promoted such values more precisely.

Creating workplace meaningfulness

In sharing their experiences on how respondents in their leadership roles set up a meaningful workplace environment where employees had their chance to articulate the values needed at work, respondents highlighted that there were two main important things: being an example as leaders and creating a supportive working environment. To create a supportive working environment, respondents demonstrated various ways to attain a positive working environment. These were, for example, creating more freedom at work for employees to be flexible, organizing in-house training to encourage personal and professional development with on-hand cases, arranging sharing sessions on various concerned topics to create opportunities for employees to share and improve their professional skills and psychological well-being, and creating belongingness and supporting individual personal development paths. In respondent 20A's answer, for instance, she expressed trust in the way she delegated work to her staff:

When we are at the peak season, I often tell my employees that it is their responsibility to manage the restaurants. They can hire part-time assistants, or they can even cancel bookings to make things effective and efficient. It is up to them. For me, being happy and peaceful at work is important for employees. If I can provide them with the freedom they need to have, that I am willing to.

It is notable that she was not attached to financial pursuits at any cost by allowing her employees to even cancel customers' bookings and requests. As such, she aimed to create a spirit of 'freedom' not for only herself but also for the employees. This is also another way of being an example by displaying positive personal values to employees.

6.1.6 The formation of altruistic love from Buddhist practice

Altruistic love refers to genuine care, appreciation and concern in leader and follower relationships (Fry, 2003). In practising Buddhism, respondents aimed to transform altruistic love into compassion.

Perception on compassion and the need for work values

In the findings reported earlier in this chapter, compassion appeared as an important Buddhist quality. However, compassion needs to be based on wisdom and in the appropriate contexts. For instance, respondents shared the same view – that being compassionate in every context is a sign of ignorance, as stated by respondent 23A:

Compassion needs wisdom (*Từ bị phải đi kèm với trí tuệ*). Wisdom here is the true understanding of the universe around us. We have to do things mindfully and not blindly. You give money for what? What will it be used for? Will it be used for good purposes? If you give a man a motorbike, does he know how to ride? Otherwise it can be very dangerous.

In expanding on how compassion is associated with virtuous conduct, respondents showed that it is important to be non-violent, even with competitors and in business (5A), and to be honest with themselves and with others, including customers (4A). Honesty with customers delivers transparency in business, as described by respondent 14A: ‘In my coffee business, I try to bring transparent business statements to customers. My slogan is: “Delicious and green coffee does not come cheap”. How can it be cheap when it is a premium product? If I say otherwise, it is obviously a lie’ (14A).

Furthermore, respondents showed distinctive attitudes towards how work should be valued. Some respondents believed that the feeling of being valued at work was a great motivator for employees: ‘Being valued at work is important. It can create psychological motivation’ (4A). This can make employees proud of themselves firstly and proud of the contribution they make to the organization (9A). However, some respondents (3) held the view that the need to be valued at work can cause suffering to employees that may limit their personal and professional development. Everyone is equally important in his or her role at work and there is no need to make distinctions as to who should be more valued than others, according to

respondent 1A. Sometimes, such praise can be counterproductive: ‘Generally, everybody wants to be recognised. To fulfil one’s ‘ego’ leads to competition and conflict’ (7A).

What respondents 1A and 7A suggested here was that if there is too much attachment to the need of being valued, this may lead to imbalance in employees’ perceptions of their work and consequently would impose an ego-centric view, which can result in negative consequences at work.

There are different views on this matter mainly because of the nature of the respondents’ work. For example, those who felt that employees’ needs for being valued were reasonable and important were working in non-profit and medical services, where the nature of their work was indeed valuable and appreciated by customers and society at large. On the other hand, it was also felt to be rational to question such needs, especially if employees were extremely attached to them.

Leadership qualities and application

This section elucidates leadership qualities shaped by respondents’ understanding of Buddhist principles and the implications for leadership practice – vision, mission, purpose and values. Respondents mentioned a number of leadership qualities drawn from their faith in Buddhist principles and practices, such as the four sublime attitudes: *maitri* (lovingkindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (joy), and *upeksha* (equanimity) (*tứ vô lượng tâm – Từ Bi Hỷ Xả*), wisdom (*trí tuệ*), the Middle Way (*Trung Đạo*), and qualities of sacrifice (*hy sinh*), patience (*nhẫn nhục*), and forbearance (*siêng năng*). Respondents felt that such qualities were useful for them because they helped them to achieve self-transformation. For example, respondent 12A emphasised a non-violent attitude (*không gây hại*) based on compassion, lovingkindness in leadership to create strong employee belongingness, and healthy leader–follower relationships:

Actually, in Buddhism there is no leadership. It is about personal transformation (*tự sửa mình*) [...]If you understand Buddhism, you will understand the concept of non-violence even in leadership. In the military, if you abuse power, we call it militarism (*quân phiệt*); if you abuse your financial ability to influence others, we call it plutocracy (*tài phiệt*); if you abuse your knowledge on others, we call it scholar autocrat (*học phiệt*). It applies to the same people who abuse their knowledge of

Buddhism to influence others. Buddhism emphasises non-violence. The Dalai Lama never encourages people to leave their own religions. (12A)

This moderate and balanced view of the Middle Way also encouraged respondents as leaders to practise the qualities of equality, fairness, tolerance and transparency in their leadership. For instance, they showed equality in listening and in respecting subordinates' views (1A) and showed fairness by taking responsibility for any collective mistakes (20A)

Traditionally, upper managers tend to give orders to subordinates. However, I am not following such tradition. I want to listen to my subordinates, share and discuss ideas with them. Only after discussion, I propose my ideas or decisions. In such way, employees can be creative and understand the situation or task better. Thus, the execution of my decisions will be more effective. That's equality to me and that is the most important, even in conversations. (1A)

More importantly, respondents (17) pay attention to being transparent and tolerant in the appropriate context. Respondents find that as leaders they need qualities of sacrifice, patience and forbearance. These qualities are developed in respondents' Buddhist practices. For example, sacrifice requires the ability to let go of personal greed and expectation as a means to get rid of suffering. Patience highlights the practice of compassion and emotional intelligence. And forbearance reflects upon wisdom, especially in being patient in pursuing a long-term and sustainable vision. Such qualities are essential for skilful leadership, especially in the contemporary competitive environment, when there is a need for differentiating between pros and cons of short-term and long-term needs in certain contexts (14A).

I always find it important to build up trust with employees, especially when we are all losing faith in the state. Buddhism teaches me to be patient, tolerant and persistent in doing the right things in the appropriate context, which I found extremely useful to build up a transparent and supportive relationship with my followers. (11A)

As suggested, Buddhist qualities of forbearance, sacrifice and patience also facilitate a positive way of establishing leader–follower relationships based on trust and openness since Vietnamese people are generally sceptical of official authorities because of adverse perceptions of the regime. Buddhist qualities enacted in leadership practices therefore, if

executed in the right way, cannot only win over employees' trust but can also be a source of encouragement for them to have a more positive way of looking at life.

Applying Buddhist principles in leadership practice

Most respondents (22) considered compassion to be a very important quality for leadership, however emphasising its effectiveness only if it is accompanied by wisdom. Qualities like sacrifice, patience, lovingkindness enable leaders to express generosity in their leadership (5A), whereas equanimity and patience encourage leaders to manage themselves better emotionally and psychologically (18A). Forbearance stimulates respondents' pursuits of long-term and sustainable outcomes in a contextually flexible way (24A).

It is evident from the interview data that, if compassion is expressed with wisdom in leadership practices, it can lead to positive outcomes. Respondent 2A highlighted that compassionate leadership needs to be context-specific and applied in the appropriate situation. Otherwise it may unintentionally lead to consistent and continuing unethical, undesirable or ineffective behaviour at the workplace:

At work, if someone has a continuous wrong doing, he or she will be rebuked (*khiển trách*) for the first and second time, but will be dismissed for the third time. You cannot be compassionate with intentionally consistent wrong or unethical behaviours. If it is because of the employee having family issues, I shall review the case or provide time off. That is what I mean by compassion combined with wisdom. I am compassionate in appropriate context and I am assertive about it. (2A)

Wisdom and transparency also promote a clear leadership style for work effectiveness, especially in following up tasks and in creating a conducive working environment (7A):

I have a contract with Sudan worth for about two million USD. Sudan is under embargo and they do not have Letter of Credit to transfer money directly to Vietnam. They have to do it through a Swiss bank. It has been a week and we have not received any payment. I asked my assistant who directly follows up this deal whether there is specificity in the deal. If it has been specific, he should have asked for proof of evidence from each step of the deal with our partners rather than just emailing back and forth. If there were a proper check up on each step of the deal, there would have been no delays or miscommunication. In terms of clarity, he should have been able to

know the exact person or department that works on the deals with specific corresponding details. There would have been no uncertainty if specificity and clarification had been applied. Being specific leads to clarity and clarity leads to specificity. It all depends on your skills. Therefore, I am aiming at building up a problem solving structure in the company. Tasks have their clear standards with clear responsibilities of different levels. Daily or weekly tasks will be recorded as reference as well. All people and departments in the company are interconnected. For me, completing a single task is a big contribution to the success of the company.

Respondent 7A highlighted the application of Sila–Samadhi–Prajna in his leadership. This example demonstrates how being mindful and transparent with tasks creates workplace effectiveness. Other respondents also demonstrated wise and compassionate leadership with their application of the Middle Way in balancing profit and sustainability and non-coercive leadership (consistent with the triple bottom line). For example, respondent 24A focused on sustainable and ethical leadership and business outcomes, eschewing illegal business conduct and financial gain:

If we know that there is a project that can bring loads of benefit but not necessarily sustainability for our business, we should not do it. For example, in Vietnam we have websites for online videos or movies. Before I had the opportunity to be pioneer in that area, to build up websites with premium video qualities for watching movies. However, after realising that it will not bring sustainability to our business because of copyrights, I dropped the idea. Some other companies now are successful in doing that type of business but they do not have copyright. I aim at long-term sustainability and not short term profits. In Vietnam, unauthorised and non-copyright businesses are plenty. I do not follow such business games in the market. That is wisdom for me. We do not let our greed overcome virtuous conduct. (24A)

Other respondents, such as 2A, showed compassion by creating a supportive working environment through understanding, sharing and non-coercion: ‘With subordinates, I listen to understand them, share with them and explain to them. With peer-to-peer, I share knowledge and also listen to their opinions to agree on a shared value and decision making.’ In relationships with competitors and partners, respondents also manifested a moderate and ‘middle’ position to maintain harmony and compassion (R7, R9, R21).

Respondents generally exhibited generous leadership styles by displaying lovingkindness and patience. Respondent 22A, for instance, expressed these qualities in participating in community events and business coaching, while respondent 8A was keen on knowledge sharing:

I participated as a chair of the business coaching program called action coaching. I really like this programme because even with 15 years of my law experience, I feel that it is not enough. As a lawyer I can only help my customers, I have gained lots of experiences from working with my clients and I want to share them. That is why when the famous action-coaching programme has decided to franchise in Vietnam, I decided to be a pioneer in that programme. Until now, I really feel that it is a means to help many people in a positive way in term of business coaching and life coaching. I also participate in social activities. I love social activities and knowledge sharing. We have the BNI program, I am the area director in Hanoi and I have direct contacts with 300 business owners out of 800. I share my experiences free of charge to help people to develop their businesses. I also like to share my experience in entrepreneurship programmes, in career development session at universities. I also involve myself in charity program. (22A)

Furthermore, respondents found the Buddhist qualities of equanimity and patience useful in training themselves in avoiding extreme or egocentric reactions caused by low emotional intelligence. Respondent 21 shared that it created a more harmonised atmosphere and less power distance within her company. The quality of forbearance and sacrifice encouraged respondents to be persistent in their pursuits, which can lead to ‘bravery’ and innovation in business (24A):

Leadership is about bravery to be able to challenge ourselves with new things that we believe is a right doing. For example, brave in letting go of the old and do new things. In 2011, we no longer did games online. We then did applications for smartphones. We were the first pioneer in applications for smartphone. Till 2014, we have become the biggest company for smartphone application. That is bravery.

However, wisdom reminded respondents of practical applications in appropriate contexts, such as flexibility in dealing with important partners and employees (11A), in giving up

financial pursuits over unethical conduct (22A), in changing products and services according to customers' preferences and tastes (8A), and in receiving recommendations and proposals from employees (18A). In summary, there was a skilful combination of leadership qualities and applications in Buddhist-enacted leadership, all in praise of flexibility and cognisant of the impact of contextual factors. This reflected the Buddhist principle of impermanence that highly encourages flexibility and non-attachment.

6.1.7 Belongingness and Community

With distinctive leadership characteristics and styles already reported, do leaders promote employee belongingness? To explore this, respondents were first asked about their sense belonging in a Buddhist community and to what extent they found it important to have a sense of belonging. An examination on their point of view on whether they could recognise employee belongingness in their company followed. The reason for exploring sense of belonging from the leaders' perspectives was that having this experience requires knowledge, perception and underlying assumptions about ways of creating employees' sense of belonging. The interviews revealed that there were different opinions about the need for Buddhist community as many respondents were of the opinion that Buddhist practice is an individual self-practice. However, most respondents felt that there was positive employee sense of belonging because of their leadership.

Different preferences for Buddhist community

Most respondents were very appreciative of having a Buddhist community as a favourable supportive environment to exchange and gain practical advice – especially to share and help others with Buddhist practices. They emphasised the importance of having a community to introduce Buddhism correctly to people to help misguided practitioners in the chaotic context of Vietnam today:

90% Vietnamese people understand Buddhism wrongly. Sharing Buddhism (*chia sẻ đạo Phật*) has now become extremely important, especially for the young generation. I feel sense of belonging in the groups that I am involved in. For example, I have a group of business Buddhist practitioners. We just had our meeting on Tuesday evening. Yesterday, we had activities for a group called loving garden for students. Friday night is for everybody. We have three types of groups like that. On the first Sunday of every month, we have 'the peaceful day' at a temple, which involves

hundreds of people. We also organize a retreat trip for 200–1000 students to attend Buddhist training programmes for two days. For the business group, we aim at meditation and we have Buddhist-enacted business discussion themes each meeting.

(19A)

However, there were conflicting opinions on whether having a Buddhist community was really necessary. Respondent 24A highlighted that, for personal advancement in practising Buddhism, having a Buddhist community was not necessary because it requires personal effort for self-transformation to be tested in various daily contexts, not only within Buddhist communities. Yet, to be able to help others in this way is one of the primary ways of establishing and pursuing vision, purpose and mission. But in general, participating in a Buddhist community was a helpful and effective means for reflexivity in Buddhist practice. Some, however, like respondent 5A, paid more attention to the efficacy of Buddhist practices that can be shared with others in life and work than to being involved with Buddhist communities.:

In Vietnam now, people like to disseminate Buddhism and like having groups. I was like that a few years ago but now I just want to practise in private. I thought that if I popularise Buddhism (*tuyên truyền đạo Phật*) for a mass audience, it will be a good thing. However, to do it in a right way is very difficult. Buddhism movement has become a trend, focusing on quantity rather than quality. Now I would like to concentrate more on the quality. In a group of 500–700 people, I can only select 4–5 people who share my view. There are levels in practising Buddhism. In life, students cannot be at the same levels as managers or CEOs. It applies to Buddhist practice as well. There are people who just joined Buddhism but they have exceptionally advanced wisdom in life and in understanding Buddhism, their level is different from those who have been practising Buddhism for years and years but as a trend rather than the pursuit of true practice. Practising Buddhism is based on levels of wisdom.

(21A)

This comment reinforced concerns over the rising Buddhist movement in Vietnam, which was identified in respondents' understanding and perception of Buddhism. Once again, responses here were contextually shaped based on individual experience, wisdom and perception. As respondent 21A described, there were different levels of Buddhist practices:

different respondents would need different skilful means, such as a Buddhist community for their practice, as long as it was established for good purposes rather than extreme ones.

Positive employee belongingness

Respondents' own sense of belongingness in such communities was important to them for trying to create a supportive environment for employees through non-coercive, compassionate, flexible, and generous leadership. They perceived a positive sense of belongingness among their employees. Two respondents said that they tried to create a close and family-oriented atmosphere at the workplace (1A & 20A); others, such as respondent 24A, promoted employee belongingness in creating a supportive professional atmosphere. Nevertheless, respondents valued humanity and collective support and effort rather than egocentric and individual pursuits in one way or another (skilful application), which enabled a positive sense of belongingness as conveyed in the responses of respondents.

6.1.8 Mindfulness at its impact on leadership and work

As reported earlier, respondents demonstrated that the application of Buddhist principles varied depending on individuals' level of wisdom and experience. In exploring the actual variety of Buddhist practices involved in leadership and their impact on leadership, the application of mindfulness practices in leadership was examined. Respondents were asked whether they applied the practice of mindfulness in their life and at work. All respondents highly appreciated mindfulness. After their recognition of the importance of this particular practice was noted, elaboration of their application and perceived outcome of their practice was sought. Finally, it was investigated whether respondents influenced their employees with mindfulness practices at work and their aims with such practices, if any.

Findings revealed that even with one particular practice of Buddhism – mindfulness – there are diverse techniques. Respondents applied different Buddhist principles in their mindfulness practices. Respondents 2A and 18A emphasised the importance of being able to balance emotions to aid concentration. Others found that wisdom enabled them to be skilful and aware of their shortcomings (7A & 15A), the Middle Way stimulated balance and effectiveness in concentration (1A & 9A), and non-attachment helped to organize work (7A & 9A):

Mindfulness is based on wisdom (*hiếu biết*). Buddhism is different from other religions in the perception that everything around us is artificial so that we can prevent our extreme attachment in life. However, we should be skilful and know how to utilise things around us. Among 100 tasks, maybe there is just one task that you really need to do but you do need to know all the 100 tasks. (7A)

Here, respondent 7A indicated how mindfulness can help an individual to prioritise workload for effectiveness. It is also apparent from the data that there are various meditation techniques involved in mindfulness based on contextual preferences of the practitioners, such as Hara breathing (*thở đan điền*), Kundalini-Chakra meditation (*thở luân xa*), mantra (*niệm*), Samatha (*thiền chỉ*), Vipassana (*thiền minh sát*), and satipatthana (*thiền quán*) (Buddhist terms for different meditation techniques), to mention but a few. There are no fixed formal techniques, formulae, or guidelines for mindfulness practice, which reflects respondent 24A perceptions of how Buddhism is an individually chosen self-practice based on one's understanding of the basic Buddhist principles and their practical implications. Differences in mindfulness practice exist because respondents are different in their personalities and characteristics, working in different industries and professions, with different knowledge and skills, and being exposed to different contexts and causes of suffering. An individual practitioner's choice of mindfulness is bound to particular contexts and personal conditions physically, psychologically and to personal preferences (12A):

For me, mindfulness means that we are able to attain balance internally regardless of external disruptions. I follow a Tibetan way of meditation that I prefer not to disclose. My physical and spiritual health is very positive and I feel like I am more balanced. I still have anger sometimes; however, it is a process of my self-transformation that needs time.

In applying the various techniques and practices in attaining a state of mindfulness, respondents pointed out both advantages and challenges associated with their choices. These experiences form respondents' underlying assumptions in initiating and creating organizational mindfulness.

Most respondents (16) shared positive outcomes out of their mindfulness practices in raising awareness (15A & 7A), controlling emotions (16A), making effective decisions (24A & 4A),

and the ability to be focused by not being attached to the physical or psychological surrounding issues. This also indicated a mindful leadership style based on their wisdom and awareness of the context to avoid extreme and negative outcomes from wrongly perceived matters or ‘ignorance’. Respondents also confirmed that they found that promoting mindfulness in their organizations through meditation retreats (19A), sharing sessions (1A), and various workshops (10A) could be helpful for employee well-being and physical, psychological and intellectual development. For instance, respondent 18A acknowledged that each individual employee is different in terms of characteristics, skills and individual pursuits, thus he or she is flexible in attending to each individual’s needs and working styles without imposing personal preferences. This does not imply inequality, but a respectful way of acknowledging individual differences.

Respondent 24A said that, in his opinion, mindfulness practices should not be imposed, but rather should be customised and offered based on employees’ needs and relevant contexts:

Mindfulness programmes depend on the need and demand of employees. My company has 1800 people with various demands. I do not impose meditation/mindfulness programmes in my company... Each month, we have discussion session for managers on topics such as stress management, flexible management, or emotional management. These sessions have been running for four years now. After a few sessions, both managers and employees tend to be more effective and enjoy more positive relationships at the workplace. (24A)

As people have different personalities, habits and desires in life, they have to find their own ways of dealing with their own bad habits or extreme desires to avoid suffering. This correlates with what respondents shared in making contextual choices in their mindfulness practices. It is crucial to make appropriate choices based on individual experience to identify the relevant practice aimed at tackling specific problems or suffering.

Based on respondents’ own experiences and choices of mindfulness practices, they said they had introduced various forms of mindfulness practices into their organizations. Before describing the specific ones in the findings, it may be helpful to note how respondents applied Buddhist qualities in their lives and particularly in their leadership roles. It would also be helpful to consider how these qualities significantly affected how respondents perceived and

introduced the *role* of organizational mindfulness. Most respondents highlighted that they experienced self-transformation in terms of better ‘ego management’ (16A) and in moderating desires (2A). Based on their understanding and application of Buddhist principles and practices in life and at work, respondents addressed various ways of bringing mindfulness into their organizations. Because respondents emphasised the importance of wisdom in attaining the state of mindfulness, not just through meditation, they encouraged mindfulness through wisdom development. For instance, respondents said they aim at developing employees’ professional skills through workshops (10A), on-the-job training (7A & 22A), experience sharing between leader and followers (13A & 21A) and among managers (24A), and enhancing employee physical and psychological well-being by organising meditation retreats (15A & 19A).

Though respondents acknowledged the effectiveness of mindfulness practice for themselves, they also understood that it is customised and personalised according to personal and contextual choices. Therefore, if it is imported into organizations, it should be a voluntary choice (19A) and based on employees’ needs (24A). Even if mindfulness plays a role at the organizational level, it should not be imposed or generalised. As respondent 12A said, there is no common formula for mindfulness and meditation practices and they should not be initiated by coercion (24A). This is an important finding reaffirming the right mindfulness practice in Buddhism compared to Western interpretations.

6.1.9 Calling

Calling is the expression of intrinsic motivation and spiritual survival in the belief that life is meaningful and individuals can make differences in life, according to Fry (2003). To evaluate whether and how respondents’ leadership vision enables such motivation and spirit, respondents were asked about the impact of their leadership on employees and the impact of leadership vision on articulating a ‘sense of calling’ in the workplace. The collected data suggests that leadership vision leads to ‘calling’ in two ways: positive direct impact and supportive working environment.

All respondents shared the view that their leadership vision was very important for their employees and their own company. It generates a clear destination (7A), and a shared vision unites employees and leaders (10A) to create trust (8A) and produce positive organizational

outcomes (18A). They acknowledged the role of context along with their vision for effective leadership (24A & 18A). As suggested by findings, employees tended to appreciate respondents' leadership vision through employee development programmes, freedom at work, positive changes in attitudes at work, and transparency. Respondents highlighted the importance of a supportive workplace environment. Accordingly, leaders supported conducting professional seminars and conferences to advance employees' careers (2A), to provide skills for self-motivation, freedom to share opinions (23A, 3A & 10A), and to train compassionate behaviour towards customers (4A), patients (6A), and members within the workplace to reduce conflicts (15A). Leaders following a balanced 'Middle Way' further stimulated transparency through moderate and non-coercive leading and acting (16A & 5A). It was evident that there is a spiritual sense of calling in how Buddhist-enacted leaders lead, as respondent 19A expressed in his response: 'I teach them knowledge and guide them spiritually'.

6.1.10 Membership response

'Sense of membership' is the feeling of being understood and appreciated through altruistic love expressed in the leader–follower relationship (Fry, 2003). To investigate whether Buddhist-enacted leadership promotes a sense of membership respondents were asked about how employees felt about their leadership practices. Most respondents (13) felt that they received positive feedback and responses from their employees: 'I think they are happier. I can see the changes in my employees: more freedom, creativity and working comfort' (24A). However, there were still a few respondents (4) who acknowledged the challenges for employees in accepting changes in leaders' leadership vision. Respondents (21) also felt that, by applying Buddhist principles into leadership, they had created a healthier working environment, whereby employees were understood and valued:

I created a 'team' culture in the company. Leader is not just a leader; I am a supporter and motivator. It is not about making orders. The most successful thing I have gained so far is to be able not to create pressures upon my employees. I don't want any unnecessary pressures from my coercion (*cưỡng chế*). (8A)

On the other hand, leadership vision and altruistic love may take time to be appreciated by employees. For example, changes from traditional working styles to more independent ones may tamper their working habit in the first instance (5A). In addition, it takes time after

changes to attain a more compassionate working attitude (6A) and changes in perception of the nature of work (4A).

Before, my employees feel that my approach to customers reduces the reputation of our organization. In their perception before, serving customers is not a premium job. Now, they understand that service is service. Excellence of services provides meaningful outcomes for customers. (4A)

Data showed that respondents were keen on creating a sustainable sense of membership through their leadership vision and altruistic love. However, as they have stated, it may not be easy for employees to adapt to changes in leadership visions at first, especially if it involves changes in working styles or perception.

6.1.11 Organizational outcomes

To evaluate in detail the impact of Buddhist-enacted leadership on organizational outcomes, respondents were asked specific questions. Firstly, their personal experience was sought in regard to applying Buddhist principles in leadership. Secondly, they were asked what specific effective outcomes resulted from their leadership in terms of organizational commitment, performance and productivity, CSR, employee physical and psychological well-being, sustainability, and life and job satisfaction. Most respondents (17) described various positive results in their self-transformation in adopting a positive view of life and effective working toward social well-being (e.g. 8A). In leadership particularly, they had learnt to control their emotions better (2A, 3A & 21A):

I am calmer and feel at peace and at ease. I do not get angry if employees make mistakes. I normally guide them to read a page of a particular Buddhist practice that is relevant to their problems or situation to help them brainstorm different ways of solving things. They appreciate the way that I handle situations and problems with a calm manner. (21A)

However, according to 19A, employees are also responsible for their actions:

I no longer control my people. People are responsible for their own karma (*ngiệp*). For example, if you are late for work, that is stealing working time from the company.

If you use company phones for personal purposes, that is also stealing. If you practise Buddhism, you would not want to do such things to create karma. Everyone has responsibility. It is the basic Buddhist principles that control them, not my leadership. (19A)

[and] to practise non-attachment in different contexts (22A).

Respondent 4A elaborated how combining Buddhist qualities like compassion, non-attachment, emotional intelligence and positive thinking leads to influence and positive outcomes:

I think applying Buddhism in leadership is effective. I practise it every day. I can buy in more people, and be influential. For example, a peer of mine and myself are often in conflict. He has a very big 'ego' in everything he does. When I work with him, I always think about being patient. My behaviour and attitude towards him have changed positively. He is influenced by me and it makes my work more effective. (4A)

And one respondent expressed the view that attractiveness leads to influence: 'As Buddhist practitioners, we do not pursue things at any cost. Interestingly, it creates attraction. Identity or personal branding and influence naturally come with it' (15A).

However, others were of the opinion that, even though enacting Buddhism is effective, it is also challenging, especially in creating employee commitment based on trust together with less authority: 'Younger employees with less experience in life are normally egocentric and it takes time for them to understand or appreciate my vision or leadership'. (13A). 4A also states:

Having policies are easier to control employee commitment, however, if we want to create commitment by trust, at some point we have to accept some unexpected behaviours or attitudes. Having said that, we should not consider it as a negative incident but rather an unfavourable context. (4A)

These comments highlight the need for skilfulness in responding to unfavourable contextual conditions to build trust with employees. When asked about CSR activities, most respondents (15) identified paying attention to the community. They acknowledged the importance of

being responsible for the environment; however, environmental responsibility tended to be more evident in some specific industries that were closely linked to industrial waste, like printing (1A). Respondent 24A, on the other hand, considered CSR more like ethical decision-making in business:

CSR (*trách nhiệm xã hội*) for our company is about doing the right things (*làm đúng*). It is not just about doing charity. Businesses always have to make decisions. The good thing here is simply making the right decision that does not affect the community and people around us. It sounds simple but it is not simple at all. [...] Doing things illegally can bring more money faster than doing things right. Not doing harm (*không làm hại*) to the society is more important than doing charity work. A lot of companies do lots of charity work, however, their business decisions do more harm than all the charity works combined. (24A)

He emphasised that a wrong business decision can create more harm by itself than all other social activities or charity combined. This expression truly shows how contextual distinctiveness affects perceptions of CSR and CSR initiatives.

In terms of performance and productivity, most respondents were satisfied. They shared that practising Buddhism made it easier to be satisfied with outcomes and to become more moderate in expectations. Respondent 22A disclosed that, sometimes because of her compassion towards clients, employees needed to sacrifice their own benefit as well:

Sometimes, employees have to sacrifice financially when they work with me. I do not charge customers with high price. I feel compassionate about people's situation and sometimes even difficult cases; I do not want to charge more than what they can afford. (22A)

Respondents (12) also paid attention to sustainable practices. For instance, they acknowledged that there is no financial sustainability if there is no consideration for the community or society since everything in the universe is interconnected. Compassion also appeared to be the dominant quality that influences leaders' social sustainability. Environmental sustainability once again was mentioned only by respondents working in contextually relevant fields (1A, 7A, 7 15A).

When asked about their impression of employee well-being and satisfaction, respondent 2A and 16A said that they provided everything in their power that they thought was necessary or favourable for employees to maintain positive well-being, both physically and psychologically. However, it was up to employees as to whether it was sufficient and satisfactory for them. This reflects back on how suffering, meaningfulness and understanding of life are contextually dependent in different perceptions by different individuals. Overall, organizational outcomes reflected respondents' beliefs and leadership styles. There are identifiable challenges in the implications of leadership practices, similar to what respondents indicated generally about practising Buddhism.

6.1.12 Leadership response to contextual differences

Respondents mentioned, on various occasions, how context played a crucial role in practising Buddhism, especially when it directly related to principles of impermanence, non-attachment, or the articulation of wisdom. Further opinions were sought from respondents about the relationships among context, Buddhism, and leadership practices.

Flexibility

Respondents strongly foregrounded the significance and effectiveness of flexibility in their leadership. Their responses reflect dynamic flexibility in how they execute their leadership in practice. Respondents (19) found that flexibility in showing compassion and awareness about context was key for leadership. Compassion is not a default action in leadership. Leaders needed to be mindful of how to express compassion in various situations, especially being sensitive and careful in circumstances where it involved unethical behaviour (24A) or human life (6A).

Flexibility (*tính linh hoạt*) is the biggest difference of Buddhism application in leadership compared to other religions or spirituality. Wisdom makes us understand things rather than being trapped by artificial problems. For example, we have rules for employees who steal from our company. If we apply hard measures, we can call the police, but there are situations when I just forgave the employee. There is no fixed regulation. Buddhism makes me understand that there are no good or bad things; it is based on perception and way of looking at things. I look at the things based on their contexts. I call the police to make an example for others; however, sometimes I just let the employee who steals know about his or her mistake. (24A)

Furthermore, context here may consist of the external environment, like market characteristics (2A) or customer preferences (8A), and internal factors, like the nature of work (3A), the diverse characteristics of the workforce (4A) and contextual changes within the organization (7A). Respondents showed that attending to these distinctive features was part of how they trained themselves and practised Buddhism.

I am flexible in my leadership. For example, when we initiate a product but do not feel that the product is suitable for the Vietnamese market, I change my strategy, investment and negotiate with partners. I never insist on doing something which is not suitable for the context. (2A)

I am flexible according to certain contexts. For example, if something goes against company policy but in a positive manner that leads to positive outcomes, I am willing to change the policy. Policies create room for work to be done in an order. If there is no order, it can be complicated and frustrating. However, if those orders become obstacles, they need to be eliminated. Policies need to be reviewed and updated regularly. It is a way of improving yourself, your work. (7A)

As practising Buddhism is a process of self-transformation, respondents acknowledged that they had been experiencing changes in their behaviours and perceptions. They found that they had become more flexible in handling things, partly because they were more flexible in managing their emotions, especially in not clinging to negative emotions. They thus were able to promote a healthier working environment, hence creating less pressure for people: 'It is different. Previously, I was quite aggressive (*nóng tính*) and I thought that as a manager or leader, I can do anything in my power. But now, I am not like that. I am more flexible' (4A). By being more generous and understanding the consequences of greed, respondents also showed flexibility in managing their desires by balancing profit and sustainability (15A) and having a righteous and sustainable view on expressing generosity (22A):

I like what Michael Roach wrote about the diamond cutter. I apply many of his principles. For example, if you do business, it has to bring profit but more importantly what is your attitude when you do it or have it? You have to earn profit in the righteous way and you should be modest when you have profit and money and use it properly. Do not waste what you have achieved. It is a means, and not a purpose. (22A)

Flexible leadership hence is a distinctive outcome of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership practice.

Leadership as a means to practise Buddhism

Since respondents showed appreciation of the effectiveness of Buddhist applications in leadership, they were asked whether leadership is a means or a context for practising Buddhism. Most respondents made positive responses regarding leadership as a skilful means for practising Buddhism, mostly because of the challenges and context that leadership roles created for conditions for self-transformation and reflection on their awareness and wisdom: ‘Buddhism is a vehicle (*phương tiện*) for me to train my mind and heart. Training myself is important for leadership and for decision-making’ (2A).

Others also shared that leadership is not the only means, but part of many means they use in life because Buddhism relates to everything that surrounds one in life, and being a husband and a father, according to respondent 24A, was equally as difficult as being a leader in applying Buddhism for self-transformation and training: ‘Everything for me in life is a means (*phương tiện*) for practising Buddhism’ (7A); ‘I use Buddhism for training myself. Buddhism for me is not a means. Leadership is part of a Buddhist practice. I need to change as being a father, a husband, not just being a leader’ (24A).

On the other hand, respondent 3A highlighted that his leadership was also based on previous leadership experiences before practising Buddhism. Therefore, leadership is a ‘fusion’ concept that blends best practices and the individual capabilities of the leader:

There are things that I apply as my basic instinct from previous leadership experience. You can say that Buddhism is a means (*phương tiện*) and you can also say that it is not. Until now, my Buddhist application has small successes. There are things that have been successful and there are things that have not been. Therefore, I cannot confirm 100%. But I believe in it.

In exploring what respondents wished to do more in their leadership roles along with their Buddhist practices, they shared various expectations, such as self-transformation and development, knowledge sharing for younger generations, promoting social well-being, and

achieving sustainability in business. There were different expectations from different respondents in different contexts; however, the following comment from respondent 24A generalises the meaning behind such expectations: ‘A Buddhist life is a rich life spiritually. It does not have specific purposes because happiness lies on the road of practising itself’ (24A). Though respondents shared expectations as meaningful purposes, they were not as important as the learning and wisdom that comes along with the process since life is impermanent and expectations need to be modified to make a contextual fit.

6.1.13 Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership and its characteristics: summary of findings

The findings showed that respondents, as Buddhist practitioners, found a rationale, effectiveness, and various positive impacts from the Buddhist applications both in life and at work. This was particularly the case for leaders enacting Buddhist principles and qualities in their leadership practices. The following figure (Figure 4.1) illustrates the relationships and outcomes of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership from the analysis of Script A interview responses.

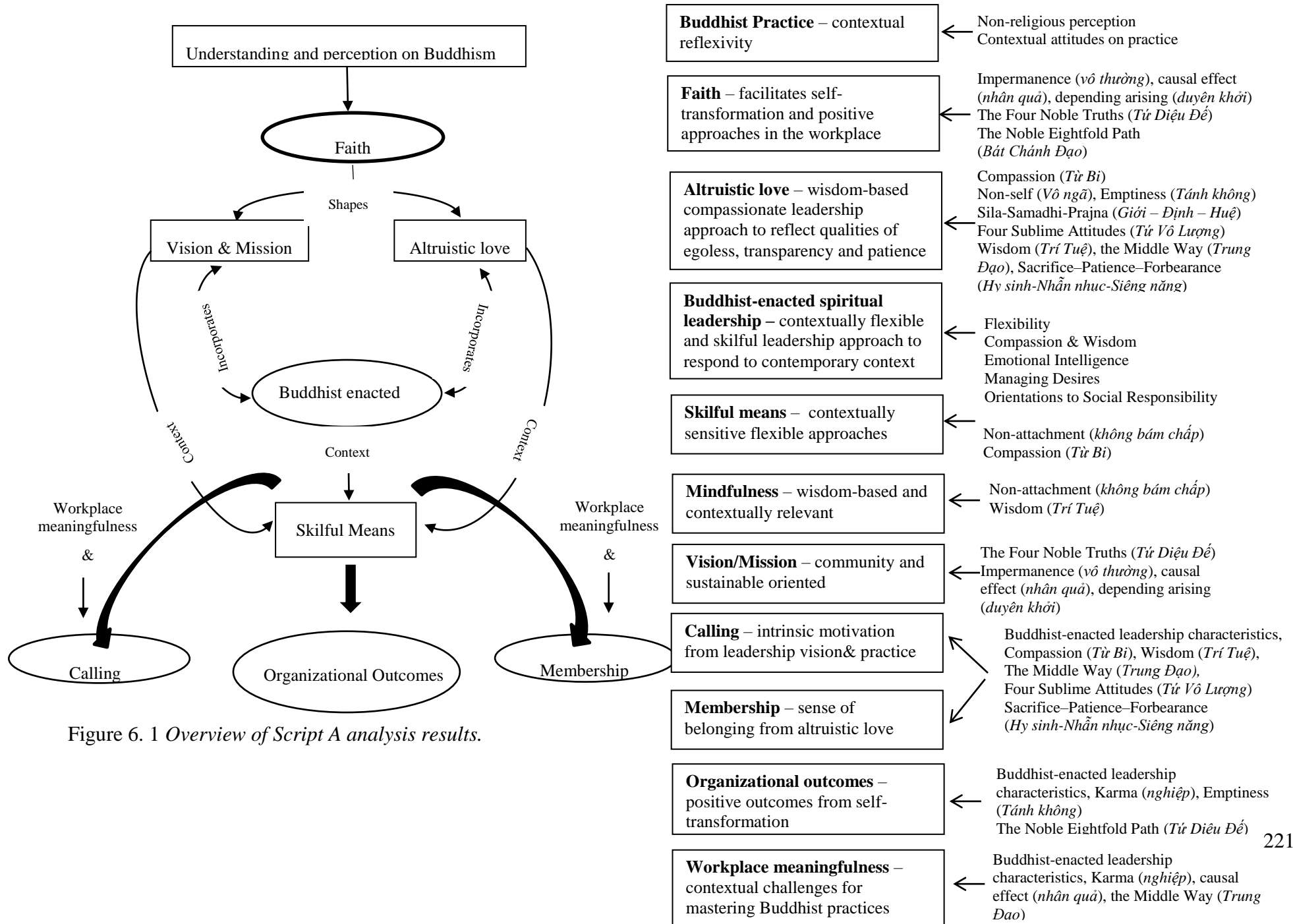


Figure 6. 1 Overview of Script A analysis results.

Based on the critical-realist grounded theory analysis (Kempster & Parry, 2011; 2014) and thematic presentation of the data findings, contextual understanding was gained by identifying contextual mechanisms and processual elements shaping Buddhist-enacted leadership. The social process emerging from the data highlights social problems resulting in lack of trust in Vietnamese society. These have led to the incorporation of Buddhist principles in leadership practices to tackle resulting ethical issues, such as bribery.

Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership in Vietnam reveals its distinctive characteristics compared to the original spiritual leadership theory of Fry (2003) in identifying and highlighting the role of context. Context appeared as the major factor in respondents' understanding and perception of Buddhist practices. In considering Buddhism as a way of life rather than a religion with basic Buddhist principles, Buddhist practitioners articulate faith in Buddhist practices in the belief that it stimulates self-transformation and a more positive and healthier working lifestyle. Application of concepts such as non-attachment, compassion and impermanence, to name a few has emerged as important Buddhist influences in shaping the enactment of leadership practice in Vietnam. For Vietnamese leaders, such beliefs shape their vision, mission and altruistic love, which eventually leads to different ways of enacting 'calling' within organizations.

Buddhist practitioners as leaders promote a positive community-oriented leadership vision, purpose and mission. Their leadership qualities, adopted from Buddhist values and qualities, such as the Four Sublime Attitudes, wisdom, the Middle Way, qualities of sacrifice, patience, forbearance, non-self and compassion, reflect their faith to form Buddhist-enacted altruistic love. These leadership qualities place importance on the skilful combination of wisdom and compassion to facilitate context-sensitive leadership responses that appreciate employees and create a positive and supportive working environment. They all combine to generate distinctive Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership.

Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership has five major leadership characteristics: leadership flexibility, compassion and wisdom, emotional intelligence, the ability to manage desires, and leadership orientations to social responsibility and sustainable commitment to society. Leaders manifest these characteristics as skilful means in a mindful way based on the principles of non-

attachment, compassion and wisdom to respond to a variety of followers' needs and contextual demands. From these Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics and the Buddhist principles that shape leaders' altruistic love, leaders generate calling and a sense of belonging that motivates organizational members intrinsically. This positive influence on organizational members also reflects how Buddhist-enacted leaders perceive meaningfulness and their approaches in creating meaningful work. Many leaders consider their workplace and leadership as contexts for mastering and practising Buddhist principles and philosophy. Therefore, leaders explore various approaches to practise Buddhism and especially their Buddhist-enacted altruistic love in a balanced Middle Way that rejects extremeness. They also find meaningfulness from many aspects of the workplace, including both positive and negative experiences for personal development, and they try to introduce this approach into organizations. This process of self-transformation and their journey in exploring and practising Buddhist principles in organizations, in the opinion of the leaders, have mostly resulted in positive organizational outcomes, especially in encouraging employees' orientation to the community and social responsibility.

The findings reveal that the most significant departure from Fry's spiritual leadership theory in the scope of this research is the role of context. Context has been the primary crucial actor in the perception and application of Buddhist principles in leadership. It is the manifestation of the Buddhist concept of impermanence, non-attachment and wisdom. Because of the overall impact of context on all the factors involved in the creating Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership, it transforms leadership into skilful means, a concept that by itself indicates skilfulness and flexibility. Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership emphasises contextual flexibility, the ability to stay wise, awakened and balanced, particularly in promoting compassionate leadership wisely in the right context. Based on the nature and specific features of the type of work and industry itself, such approaches stimulates workplace meaningfulness and spiritual leadership that intensify calling and membership within organizations.

Leadership using skilful means also endorses leaders to skilfully capture and seize the opportunities of both internal and external contexts to foster balance between profit and well-being and between means and ends, and to stimulate sustainability and sustainable development. Rather than placing importance on the whole of the triple bottom line of CSR, Buddhist-enacted

leaders try to best utilise the pillars that are relevant to their contexts of businesses and industries and use them as a means to further reinforce and strengthen the remaining ones. For example, financial sustainability is an effective means to trigger social well-being and green and environmentally sustainable production and protection. Therefore, Buddhist-enacted leadership enhances corporate social responsibility, sustainability and employee well-being. For organizational commitment and performance and productivity, the findings suggest the word ‘improved’, mainly because interview respondents have changed their perception from money making as end purposes to money making as a means to an end. This entails a pursuit for good ends that is initiated flexibly in accordance to the appropriate context. Respondents are willing to exchange profitable projects for children’s intellectual development (1A), for simply helping out customers in difficult situations (22A), and for maintaining virtuous conduct and sustainable business (24A). It reflects what respondents mean by ‘being rather doing’ and by finding happiness and meaningfulness while practising leadership.

To explore whether ‘context’ and leadership as skilful means are exclusive features in Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam compared to non-Buddhist spiritual leaders, the following sections present a comparative investigation with non-Buddhist leadership practitioners.

6.2 Analysis of Script B – Non-Buddhist leadership practitioners

To explore how Buddhist-enacted leadership is distinctive from spiritual leadership, seven interviews were conducted with leaders who claimed themselves to be spiritual but not Buddhist practitioners. The same methodological analysis was applied for Script B interviews like it was used for Script A to reveal relational and processual mechanisms shaping spiritual leadership practices and examine its similarities or differences with Script A. The sample size of spiritual leaders was smaller because it was relatively hard to find people who identified themselves as spiritual but not Buddhist in the context of Vietnam. Interviewees were presented with the same questions but with Buddhist-specific ones removed to identify the main emergent themes (see Appendix C) for comparison with those of Buddhist respondents.

In order to illustrate aggregate dimensions from selective coding based on grounded theory approach of analysis for comparison purposes between Script A and Script B, interview responses and identified themes and representative data are provided at Appendix D.

Understanding spirituality

Respondents to Script B claimed themselves to be spiritual and did not see connections with religious beliefs. For them, being spiritual meant having belief in their chosen '*philosophies and principles that are suitable*' (7B) for their lives and work and having belief in their actions (1B). Spirituality for these respondents was deeply embedded in respondents' choice of action and preferences at work, being fully aware of the consequences and impact of those actions on many aspects of life and work. On the other hand, they understood religion as more closely related to rituals with fundamental rules, not something that they could freely express in the form of practical actions like spirituality.

Faith

Respondents to Script B (5) expressed perceptions of life based on the belief that to be present in life is an opportunity. Therefore, they have faith in the present life, in their life purposes and pursuits. Based on their spiritual beliefs and understanding of the meaning of life brought by the opportunities to be present in this life, they had faith in what they do, especially in good intentions not just for the 'self' but also for others, including positive intentions for employees and organizations at large. As one respondent said: 'Have humanity in what we do and bring prosperity for all members of our company' (2A). Having faith motivated respondents to attend positively to the challenging demands of life and work.

Vision

Having faith in their actions and life choices, respondents to Script B (4) expressed confidence in their leadership visions, taking into consideration what was in the interest of both the organization and society at large. Leaders' visions demonstrated their appreciation of life: 'If you do not understand or appreciate life, whenever you are, you can hardly find your happiness' (6B). Thus leadership for them is about 'taking own responsibility not just for ourselves but for others' (4B), 'being able to share and motivate employees' (1B), and especially the ability to

promote ‘empowerment and inspiration’ (7B). Leadership is to fully appreciate the opportunity and people they are working with. Therefore, their perceptions of spirituality and faith strongly shaped their leadership vision.

Mission and purpose

With positive vision and appreciation of life, respondents to Script B (4) shared their positive orientations both in their personal and organizational purposes and missions. Leaders found purpose in being ‘happy in life and helping others to be happy’ (4B), in developing personal career (2B), in utilising personal experience and knowledge to ‘build a better society’ (6B). Purpose was also ‘living life to the fullest’ (4B). They believed that to follow such pursuits, there is ‘a need for outer skills but to be able to have outer skills and do our tasks effectively, inner strength and inner competency are the sources’ (4B). How leaders perceive life with spiritual values as an opportunity is clearly embedded in their personal purposes and organizational missions.

Meanings and values

Script B leaders believed that work is part of life, in which, one said, being passionate is crucial (4B). It is also important to acknowledge values of life to generate sustainable leadership orientations. Bringing out the values in each individual at the workplace generates appreciation of life opportunities. For example, ‘Ethics is the most important aspect in either in life or at work. If we aim at only gaining individual benefit or advantage at work, it will not lead to sustainability’ (3B). And in organizations, there is a need for ‘lovingkindness between people and people’ (1B). Respondents (2) believed that building a meaningful work atmosphere will also deliver this message to other organizational players. Thus, to elaborate meaningful work to employees, leaders lead by example (4B). They have both appropriate company policies (2B) to foster ethical working habits as well as to promote employees’ ethical behavior such as highlighting a meaningful task done by an employee and employees’ ethical efforts in solving difficult tasks (6B) to inspire and motivate employees.

Altruistic love

Maintaining awareness of the importance of having a meaningful workplace, the respondents (6) placed importance on the qualities of generosity, wisdom, forbearance and honesty. In particular, they considered discipline as an essential leadership quality in Vietnam: ‘Discipline is very important. It is appropriate in the Vietnamese context. People tend to prefer their comfort zones and are reluctant to comply with company policies’ (6B).

Therefore, besides being compassionate, generous, flexible and having the ability to listen and share as leaders, Script B respondents promote leading by example, the ability to take responsibility and to be persistent in decision making. These qualities facilitate leaders to lead in a way that encourages meaningful work but at the same time attend to the working habits of the Vietnamese people by maintaining certain levels of discipline.

Sense of belonging

Four respondents of Script B highlighted the importance of teamwork and workplace community to share knowledge and enhance skills for individuals and as a group, for example: ‘Helping others is helping ourselves as well’ (6B). As an important aspect of the workplace, a leader said that it is a personal responsibility to create sense of belonging in the organization (4B) because it involves personal responsibility for individual choices and feelings. Leaders contribute to enhancing employees’ sense of belonging; however, this is not the sole motivator (1B, 2B).

Mindfulness

Script B leaders (3) displayed different viewpoints on the impact of mindfulness practices at the organizational level. Preference for mindfulness practices depends on experience and preference at work, said one (2B). Therefore, it does not always have positive impact at work: ‘If I am result oriented and focused too much on work, I might lose my opportunities to get to know my employees better’ (3B). Mindfulness can also affect relationships at work, especially when it creates stress, one respondent said (1B), rather than peace of mind because of inappropriate application of mindfulness practices. In addition, work experience alone can be effective, especially when teams have specific goals and they revisit them on a weekly basis to reflect on them and gain experience to improve. In such cases, ‘mindfulness has no specific role’ (3B).

Therefore, for Script B leaders, mindfulness did not have a definite impact on their leadership styles and organizational outcomes.

Calling

To initiate calling in organizations, Script B respondents (7) placed importance on leadership vision and supportive and responsible leadership. These approaches included sharing knowledge and experiences with employees, providing them with clear guidelines and directions, and willingness to take responsibility when tasks failed. With such leadership practices, leaders observed changes in employees' attitudes towards work: 'They are being more and more honest in promoting the quality of our products for customers. Now they see how we work in the company and they respect the value we bring into business' (1B). According to leader 1B, enacting calling in this way is more effective when it does not come from top-down pressures.

Sense of membership

In a creating sense of membership, Script B respondents (2) believed that the nature of the work itself is very important. If a leader has a good vision, the work itself is meaningful, for example, how leaders choose products that serve the community and treat customers with respect leads to employees experiencing a sense of membership (1B). Leadership that aims more at sharing rather than coercive leading also elicits positive responses from employees.

Organizational outcomes

In reflecting on leadership effectiveness, respondents of Script B (4) thought that they could not always influence followers and that, in some cases, they were not as effective as they should be (1B, 4B), partly because of the Vietnamese culture and employees' skepticism about new approaches. Additionally, they emphasised that employee commitment comes from employees' own passion towards work and that sometimes there was a need for policies and conditions in their employment contracts that would maintain employee commitment (6B). They expressed the view that occasionally there were tasks with short-term goals for financial purposes, in which case employees were not very satisfied (2B). On the other hand, some employees had particular financial needs and personal development demands that companies could not always fulfil (1B, 6B).

Although a number of respondents mentioned that they would like to increase their social responsibility and build sustainable businesses, their financial capabilities depended largely on ‘external factors like policy changes within the industry’ (1B). Organizational effectiveness, including employees’ positive attitudes, does not depend solely on the leader but also on other stakeholders, including employees’ various desires, attitudes and perceptions.

Responses to context

For most of the respondents, leadership is felt to be a challenging role (2B, 5B). This includes leadership approaches to deal with various aspects of contemporary contexts. Leaders in Script B (3) found that for good and responsive leadership they had to be flexible with different employees, responding to different working styles (1B) and different work contexts and scenarios (5B). Leaders also emphasised that, though coercive leadership is no longer desirable in today’s context (2B), and giving employees more freedom and flexibility in their work can be effective, there should still be a certain level of follow-up and disciplinary rules so that employees do not take advantage of leaders’ goodwill.

In Script B findings, respondents express belief in life and positive visions, purposes and missions. Such a positive approach leads to the appreciation of workplace meaningfulness, the formation of altruistic love, sense of belonging, sense of calling, sense of membership, and positive organizational outcome in terms of organizational commitment, performance, productivity and sustainability. Respondents displayed awareness of context in their flexible leadership approaches.

However, the findings showed destabilised and unclear results for the application of mindfulness, overall leadership effectiveness, social responsibility and employee well-being and satisfaction. The practice of mindfulness for Script B respondents did not originate from any specific method of practice, but rather depended on their work experience and passionate preferences in their work (1B, 2B, 3B & 4B). As a result, they revealed that sometimes mindfulness created a negative impact caused by their own unbalanced concentration on work building leader–follower relationships, thus creating a stressful working environment (1B & 3B).

In terms of CSR practices, respondent 2B acknowledged the lack of concern by her company for CSR, and respondent 7B emphasised that CSR should not be a responsibility of his own company. In his view, it was more important for businesses to practise it voluntarily rather than defining it as a specific responsibility to be obeyed or even followed. Even though some respondents indicated that they had designed career paths in their organizations (3B & 6B), employee well-being and satisfaction were affected because of their lack of capability to put into practice what they learned from training programmes designed to help them (6B). This reflected a rather hectic working atmosphere caused by imbalance in practising mindfulness and pursuing their personal expectations for career development. Though Script B respondents showed positive visions, some of the visions did not reflect long-term sustainability in practice, which influenced employee satisfaction (2B).

The following section unpacks whether such findings differ from Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership and the reasons behind such differences.

The findings show that there are characteristics that are shared by Buddhist-enacted and non-Buddhist spiritual leaders as well as those that are distinctive to different between the two groups (see Appendix D for detail).

6.2.1 Comparable features of Buddhist-enacted and non-Buddhist spiritual leadership

Script A and Script B respondents share a common non-religious view of spirituality. Respondents did not claim themselves to be religious and did not consider spirituality to be a religion. Buddhist practitioners looked at Buddhism as a particular way of living, while for non-Buddhist respondents spirituality was more about following appropriate philosophies and principles and having faith in their own actions.

Although Script A and Script B respondents had different approaches and rationale for articulating faith, they looked at life positively. Such attitudes generate a positive life vision, organizational vision and leadership attitudes, particularly in pursuing social and community

well-being. Furthermore, both groups expressed positive purposes that supported positive organizational missions. For instance, for both groups, organizational missions are oriented towards customers, the community, and financial capability. Both Buddhist and non-Buddhist leaders were aware of both internal and external capabilities and skills to pursue their purposes. Additionally, they both placed importance on workplace meaningfulness and the values that are needed in creating it.

Buddhist and non-Buddhist spiritual leaders also share similar leadership qualities: forbearance, generosity, honesty, compassion, generosity and flexibility. They also shared the experience of a positive sense of belonging from participating in spiritual groups, generating a positive employee sense of belonging, calling, and membership in stimulating changes in employee working attitudes by creating a supportive environment. Both types of leaders have been able to enhance their organizational outcomes in terms of employee commitment, performance, productivity and sustainability with their positive leadership vision. They expressed great concern over the necessity to be contextually flexible and prepared for any contextual changes in their leadership.

6.2.2 Distinctive features of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership and non-Buddhist spiritual leadership

Even though Buddhist-enacted spiritual leaders share some comparable characteristics with non-Buddhist spiritual leaders, there are still significant differences to take into consideration. The choices of the former with regard to faith, vision, mission, mission and purpose, mindfulness, for example, are based on clearly identified Buddhist principles and qualities. The latter group of leaders on the other based their choices on individual, professional preferences and the nature of their work.

For instance, in identifying their beliefs, Script B respondents showed positive thinking and awareness about the meaning of life based on the nature of their work and life and work values at both individual and collective levels. Script A respondents revealed dynamic ways of living life adopted from the Noble Eightfold Path based on their understanding of basic Buddhist principles, the fundamental sources of happiness from the Four Noble Truths, and the principles

of non-self and non-attachment. This is associated with their positive attitudes towards combining Buddhist practices and leadership for self-transformation and the creation of a supportive working environment. In respect of vision, because Buddhist practitioners acknowledge the fundamental causes of suffering, they value contextual flexibility and sustainability based on the principle of impermanence, people development for wisdom articulation, and moderating desires and based on the Middle Way. Buddhist practitioners perceived Buddhism as a book of knowledge for living life positively and meaningfully. They expressed spiritual purposes to fulfil their Buddhist practice, such as having wisdom to help others, share Buddhist practices, and to attain peace, freedom and enlightenment.

Though both Buddhist and non-Buddhist leaders have enthusiastic views on meaningfulness and values, non-Buddhist leaders tended to explore workplace meaningfulness based on their individual and professional preferences alongside social responsibility, whilst Buddhist-enacted leaders viewed the workplace as part of their Buddhist practice and, for that reason, work was meaningful in many ways. Apart from that, there is a difference in how Script A and Script B respondents maintain values and meaningfulness at the workplace. Non-Buddhist leaders tend to find company policies efficient in limiting negative workplace behaviour while Buddhist leaders aim at providing freedom at work for employees.

In expressing altruistic love, both types of leaders showed similar approaches in their leadership. Even when non-Buddhist leaders highlighted a unique approach in an area like enforcement, part of it reflected contextual flexibility. However, Buddhist leaders tended to pay more attention to emotional intelligence and the ability to manage themselves better because of a combination of Buddhist principles, such the Middle Path and the practice of non-attachment.

There are also identifiable differences in how Script A and Script B respondents showed attitudes to belongingness and created employee belongingness and organizational mindfulness. Script B respondents showed strong preference for a work community based on teamwork, while Buddhist leaders emphasised the importance of having a Buddhist community for sharing, but they also claimed that it is a personal practice. Furthermore, some non-Buddhist leaders felt that it is employees' responsibility to create their own sense of belonging at work. It is part of

Buddhist practice to be able to help and express generosity to employees. In applying mindfulness at work, Buddhist leaders applied a variety of specific mindfulness techniques compared to non-Buddhist leaders, who generated mindfulness practices according to their preference and own experiences. Consequently, Buddhist leaders had a more balanced and flexible approach to mindfulness practices that fosters a positive impact on life and at work in comparison to the destabilising impact of non-Buddhist leaders' application of them. Accordingly, Script A respondents enabled a more positive and clearer outcome for organizational mindfulness.

In terms of leadership outcomes, Buddhist leaders encouraged a more positive membership response through their leadership vision. The overall outcomes of Buddhist-enacted leadership are positive in terms of CSR, employee well-being and satisfaction. As parts of Buddhist practice concern self-transformation, Buddhist-enacted leaders are motivated to stimulate CSR as part of their sense of responsibility. On the other hand, non-Buddhist leaders did not consider it as a responsibility and did not mention specific actions and concerns about CSR. Therefore, the practice of CSR of non-Buddhist leaders was not significant in comparison to the CSR practices of Buddhist-enacted leaders.

The more complex and challenging the context is, the more leaders need to manage emotions and desires. This approach was not noticeable in non-Buddhist leaders' views. In spite of the fact that both types of leaders appreciated flexibility in leadership in responding to context, Buddhist leaders emphasised the importance of wisdom as part of a distinctive approach in considering various types of means, including leadership in response to context. For Buddhist-enacted leaders, leadership is one of the many means to practise Buddhism; thus, their responses to context was flexible not only in their leadership but also in managing and expressing their inner self and their qualities, behaviour and attitudes.

In summary, it is apparent from the findings that the embracement of both Buddhist principles and spirituality in leadership practices is influenced by contextual variables, such as the levels of skepticism in society, concerns over superstitious beliefs of spiritualism, folk traditions and rigid Confucian values. These contextual variables, as social and institutional problems due to a

dominant one-party policy, serve as mechanisms in the enactment of Buddhist principles and spirituality in leadership practices. As a result, Buddhist principles and certain spiritual values adopted from Vietnam's national-identity culture inform leadership vision, mission and the enactment of altruistic love from a Buddhist perspective. This generates calling and membership in a more positive and supportive organizational environment in response to the challenge of a transitional context with weak legal systems and uncertainty.

However, diving deeper into these leadership approaches to examine contextual, theoretical and processual understanding of the emergent leadership phenomena, it becomes clear that both Buddhist-enacted and non-Buddhist spiritual leadership practices in Vietnam have some distinguishing features. For instance, in using skilful means in practising Buddhism, Buddhist practitioners manifest a more skilful leadership that has a more positive impact on organizational outcomes overall. And Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership displays more dynamic contextual flexibility based on wisdom, which includes a positive process of self-transformation. Further consideration of these differences is addressed in the discussion chapter (Chapter Seven).

6.3 Content analysis of observations and organizational documents

To increase the validity and reliability of the data collected from the interviews and to explore further how Buddhism plays a significant role in respondents' organizations, the author conducted a content analysis of observations, texts from documents obtained from respondents of Script A, and from participating in some company events of Buddhist respondents. Because of the limited number of Script B respondents and given the fact that most of the interviews with Script B respondents were conducted outside their companies, there was no opportunity to conduct such observations for these respondents. The data secured from observations and documents of Script A respondents highlight the existence of a Buddhist and spiritual atmosphere within some organizations, the initiatives to enhance social and employee well-being and development, and reflections of Buddhist practices on leaders' emotional intelligence.

6.3.1 The presence of Buddhist and spiritual symbols in the organizations studied

Arriving approximately one hour before and staying for another one to two hours after interviews to take tours around the respondents' companies enabled observation of any distinctive features of the companies' organizational culture. These observations showed that some leaders introduce and created a spiritual environment for their employees through various means, such as Buddhist symbols, a library with Buddhist books, a sacred place for Buddhist practices and the display of Buddhist scriptures. Table 6.1 shows representative observations.

Table 6. 1 *Evidence of Spiritual Presence in Buddhist Respondents' Organizations*

Location	Observations
Company 2A	The display of the organizational mission with Buddhist symbols and images on each floor of the organization The display of the statue of The Buddha in the boardroom and leader's office
Company 3A	The display of Buddhist symbols and scriptures in the leader's office A Buddhist learning centre with a Buddhist library consisting of Buddhist Sutras and applied texts located in a separate building beside the company A Buddha Yoga Centre located on the fourth floor
Company 7A	The display of Buddhist books on each floor of the company The display of Buddhist symbols and pictures of the Buddha in common areas
Company 10A	Tibetan decorations with Tibetan Buddhist paraphernalia, Tibetan thangkas, and a prayer wheel in the leader's office The display of Tibetan Agarwood Prayer Beads Mala in the leader's office and Agarwood incense sticks in the common area Soft Tibetan mantra music in the leader's office
Company 12A	The display of Buddhist scriptures and Tibetan Buddhist symbols and books in the common area The display of Buddhist proverbs and Dharma in the common area
Company 19A	The display of Buddhist Dharma in the guest room The display of company slogans and names with Buddhist meanings: 'Ha' – river, 'Thai' – light; 'Thai Ha' – the peaceful river symbolising a Buddhist company in the common area of the company The display of Buddhist books in the common area of the company

Company 23A	The display of Buddhist symbols and scriptures in the leader's office
Company 24A	The display of Buddhist scriptures and symbols in the leader's office The display of Tibetan mantra: 'Om Mani Padme Hum' in the leader's office

Buddhist-enacted leaders bring a positive spiritual atmosphere into their companies. Some express their desire to share their Buddhist experience with employees to enhance their understanding and possible application of Buddhism in life and at work by providing Buddhist learning materials (3A, 7A, 12A & 19A), introducing Buddhist Dharma and symbols (2A, 7A, 10A & 12A) and even providing venues for learning and practising Buddhism (3A). However, there were leaders who prefer to display Buddhist-related materials in their own offices (10A, 23A & 24A). Hence, observations reflected interview findings on how some leaders consider Buddhist practice as a personal practice and a self-transformation process, rather than as a universal practice that is applicable to different individuals in the same way. It is notable that respondent 3A's company in particular shows a firm commitment to promoting employee well-being and social contribution to the community by providing a Buddhist learning and practising centre open to the public. The findings indicate individual perception and individual choice in practising and disseminating Buddhism for a wider audience in their companies.

6.3.2 Employee well-being

Further documentation was obtained by the researcher's participation in the inauguration ceremony of the Buddhist Yoga Centre at respondent 3A's company and two Saturday Buddhist events of respondents 23A and 24A organized at 23A's company and another venue outside respondent 24A's company. Along with the documents obtained from these events and from other respondents' events, it was possible to unpack how some particular leaders enhanced employee physical and psychological well-being.

Respondent 3A dedicated the inauguration ceremony of The Buddha Yoga Centre to a Venerable, who gave a full explanation to participants of its purpose (including opening this Yoga Centre to employees and the public free of charge). He emphasised the generosity that

organizations should show in appreciating how employees exchange their health for fulfilling eight hours of tasks and responsibilities at the workplace. Thus, taking care of employees' health is partly the responsibility of the organization. The centre was not merely for yoga practices, but also for promoting Buddhist values and their application through promoting the meaning of yoga and its practices to participants based on 10 principles (see Appendix B).

The aim of the Centre was to improve the well-being of employees and participants by providing them with peace of mind through the principles of the yogi practitioner and improving their breathing techniques. The founders of the centre believed that correct breathing techniques stimulate oxygen and glucose burning, thus enhancing energy and brain functioning. For example, in the inauguration of the Centre, they presented *pranayama* (kỹ thuật thở) – the regulation of breath and the control of inhalation and exhalation – and *kumbhaka* (giữ hơi thở) – the production of heat through breathing affecting *chakras* (luân xa) – sources of spiritual energy in the physical body. Thus, the Centre was an effective means and place for employees to achieve or regain their inner and outer strengths that was highly appreciated and welcomed.

Besides the Yoga Centre, other leaders, such as leader 24A, developed and applied social activities, such as the wiser ball game, to promote employee physical well-being and intellectual skills. He organized this social activity once a week, open to everyone who was keen on playing, not just his employees. The researcher's observation is that wiser ball is a healthy game that develops a combination of physical strength, strategic planning and brainpower, teamwork and unity, and morality. Each match observed by the researcher had no similarity: they varied in sequence, direction, strength of attacks from the players based on different layouts of obstacles in the playing field, and attacking strategy and techniques. Participants enjoyed playing the games and showed concentration in doing so. They also identified and exchanged lessons learnt from each match.

Respondents 15A, 19A and 22A also made it possible to explore more about some meditation and voluntary programmes provided by their organizations. These programmes aimed at providing participants with voluntary meditation experiences at select monasteries in Vietnam. Participants in these programmes volunteered to help monks with daily activities like cleaning,

cooking and even farming. They also had the opportunity to attain peace of mind at such places to practise meditation. The programmes were organized once of month on weekends to encourage employees and other participants to join, and the cost is covered by a group of Buddhist business leaders, some of whom were participants in this study.

Buddhist-enacted spiritual leaders showed further awareness of employee psychological well-being. Respondents 15A and 19A openly provided documents detailing their social weekly and monthly activities and schedules to their employees. In such sessions, they delivered various topics, namely generosity, lovingkindness, greed, peace, and attachment, to name but a few. All these topics closely related to employees' work. These sharing sessions with specific topics are a form of positive psychology for employees, helping them in coping with stress and challenges both in life and at work.

It is apparent from the researcher's observations that a number of Buddhist-enacted leaders paid significant attention to promoting employees' physical and psychological well-being through various means, incorporating Buddhist principles and their application.

6.3.3 Wisdom development

The researcher's observations at respondents 3A's and 24A's Saturday organizational events revealed that they demonstrate great concern in creating opportunities for employees' knowledge and wisdom development. In doing so, respondents incorporated and applied Buddhist principles and practices in a very practical way. For instance, respondent 3A invited a well-known Buddhist Venerable to conduct sharing sessions for his employees at his company. In this event, the Venerable explained how practical it is to bring Buddhism into business. He rationally described how meditation and the application of Buddhist qualities might enhance employees' health and relationships in life and at work. He talked about how everything in life is a means for Buddhist practice of self-transformation for greater purposes. This reflected well what interview respondents shared in the interviews. He highlighted ways for employees to tackle frustrating, stressful and unexpected situations through non-attachment. He further linked desires to suffering, and he reaffirmed that financial pursuits were just a means to an end and that

employees should therefore not cling to such pursuits. His sharing fostered intellectual interpretation, perception and wisdom about life in general and work and working relationships in particular.

Apart from formal organizational gatherings as in the case of respondent 3A, respondent 24A organized monthly sharing sessions open to employees and others interested. Participants discussed and shared their experiences relating to monthly-specified topics. In a session on generosity attended by the researcher, many of them express their concerns about work related problems and misunderstandings. By sharing such concerns, they received responses and practical advice from their colleagues and other participants that many of them found relevant and helpful. Respondent 24A participated as a convenor and explained in detail from his experiences how generosity stimulated a more positive personal and professional relationship for him. He further unpacked how generosity brought peace of mind for him on various occasions. At the end of these topic-oriented meetings, there were informal networking opportunities for participants, with drinks and snacks. Participants were able to share private issues with their preferred participants and receive confidential advice. The meeting had over 50 participants, including both company employees and non-company participants. Such a diverse group stimulated context-rich situational responses that enhanced overall wisdom and were well appreciated by participants.

6.3.4 Buddhist-enacted spiritual leaders' emotional intelligence

On appropriate occasions, the opportunity was taken by the researcher to arrive earlier than scheduled interviews and to stay longer after interviews for more observations. Different leaders' behaviours and attitudes were identified, especially how they displayed emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to an ability to recognise the meaning of emotions, the relationships associated with emotions, and the practical ability to solve problems based on such understanding. Emotional intelligence also enhances the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, and understand the information of those emotions and manage them (Mayer et al., 1999).

Emotional intelligence is associated with self-transformation, and this was reflected in the findings from interviews in how the practice of self-transformation is probably the most difficult practice because it challenges human's natural habits (6A & 12A). For instance, the researcher sometimes intentionally arrived 10 to 15 minutes late to discover respondents' reactions because many of them praised the practice of non-attachment in Buddhism. The responses varied. For instance, while respondent 19A reacted negatively and showed signs of dissatisfaction during the whole process of the interview, respondent 1A was not bothered by the researcher's late arrival and was relaxed and welcoming regardless of it. This shows how respondents may have different levels of practising non-attachment and managing their emotions.

In another scenario, the researcher conducted interviews at respondent 20A's restaurants. One interview was scheduled at lunchtime – the busiest time of the day for office lunch breaks and lunch receptions for businesspersons. The interview was interrupted numerous times as employees were coming to report booking incidents, complaints and guests' requests. This provided the chance to observe both the respondent's leadership skills and her emotional intelligence. She responded very quickly and with no signs of stress. She displayed calmness and effective delegation. She let her employees make the final decisions and considered it as a learning opportunity for them. Her encouragement was a great support for her employees in the given chaotic circumstances, showing a skilful way of solving problems on the basis of using emotional intelligence.

Another respondent, 7A, willingly invited his assistant who had just made mistakes in doing his tasks to join and listen to our interviews as a way of coaching him and sharing experiences from the interview. In the interview, this respondent highlighted the examples relevant to the case of his assistant as an indirect way of encouraging him. Respondent 7A showed another skilful way of showing his emotional intelligence. First, he was emotionally stable, not showing signs of disappointment or anger to response to the mistakes his employee just made. Second, he realised that his employee was stressed because of the situation and he wanted to encourage and coach him to learn from mistakes rather than imposing more stress on him that may result in the employee's accelerating levels of desperation or depression.

It is apparent from the observations that interview respondents had different ways of behaving and using their emotional intelligence when dealing with unwanted or unexpected situations. This proves two things that interview respondents have mentioned in their interview responses: Buddhist practice is personal and context-specific.

Part II – Quantitative Analysis

The questionnaire for the quantitative phase included both Likert-type questions to measure the responses to the identified Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics in the previous qualitative part and open-ended questions to further explore the emergent. First, statistical analysis of the Likert-type questions was conducted, followed by content analysis of open-ended questions.

6.4 Statistical analysis of Likert-type questions

The questionnaires were sent out to a number of interviewees' organizational members since a number of them refused to participate due to either personal preference not to disclose their Buddhist practice or concerns over miscommunication during organizational restructuring or changes in organizational strategy. The following table 6.2 summarises response rates and the demographic descriptions of the respondents.

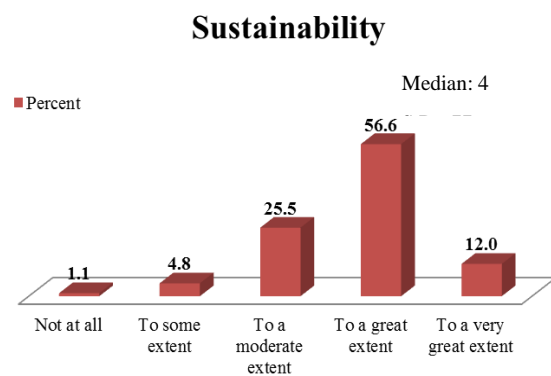
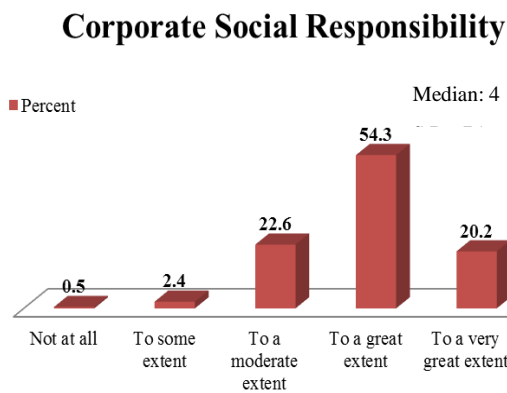
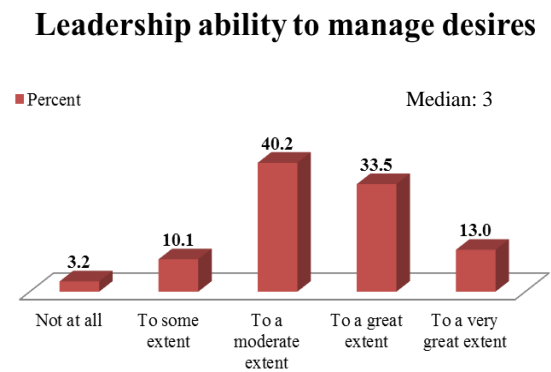
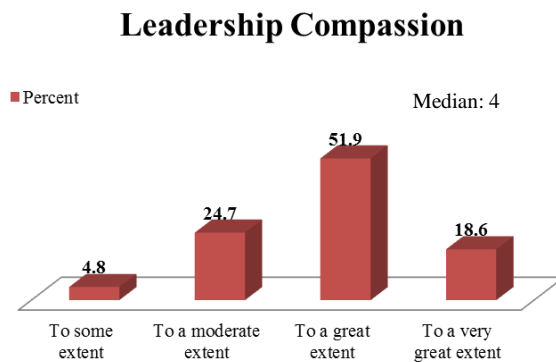
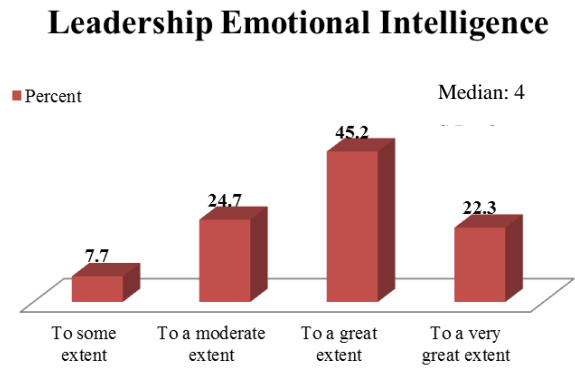
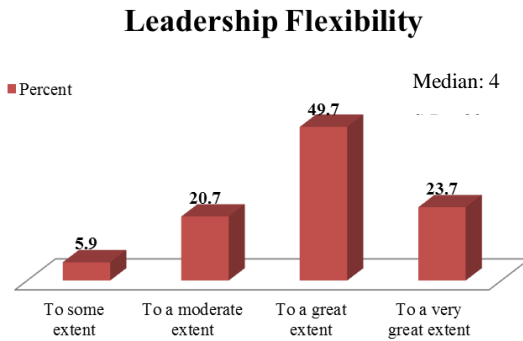
Table 6. 2 *Summary of Response Rates*

	N (Quantity)	% (Percentage)
<i>Response rate by sector/industry</i>		
Pharmaceutical	39	10.4
Education	84	22.3
Construction/Real Estate	91	24.2
Hospitality/Service	35	9.3
Information Technology	21	5.6
Printing	40	10.6
Medical	52	13.8
Transportation	14	3.7
Total	376	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	198	52.7
Male	178	47.3
<i>Age</i>		
18–24	52	13.8
25–34	223	59.3
35–44	86	22.9
45–54	12	3.2
55–64	3	0.8
65+	0	0
Total	376	100.0
<i>Positions of respondents</i>		
Subordinate	271	72.1
Supervisor	59	15.7
Manager	26	6.9
Consultant	6	1.6
Director	4	1.1
Deputy Manager	4	1.1
Deputy Director	6	1.6
Total	376	100.0
<i>Positions respondents reporting to</i>		
Manager	113	30.1
Supervisor	81	21.5
Director	113	30.1
CEO	48	12.8
Deputy Director	21	5.6
Total	376	100.0

Results show that the overall responses to Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership characteristics and organizational outcomes were positive. Most responses agree that Buddhist-enacted

leadership characteristics are shown to a great extent and indicate positive organizational outcomes in terms of CSR and sustainability. The following Table 6.3 displays the responses in detail.

Table 6. 3 *Summary of Responses of the questionnaire results*



It is evident from the results that most respondents agreed with Buddhist characteristics of leaders and leadership orientations towards social responsibility and sustainability to a great extent (modal responses were ‘to a great extent’); except for moderate leadership ability to manage desires (modal responses were ‘to a moderate extent’). Most of the Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership characteristics seem to be effective in leaders.

To see the overall picture of the responses, the responses were categorised as follows: ‘not at all’ and ‘to some extent’ as ‘low extent’, ‘to a moderate extent’ as ‘moderate extent’, and ‘to a great extent’ and ‘to a very great extent’ as ‘great extent’ categories. The following graph shows the overall look at the responses in comparisons with percentages for each category.

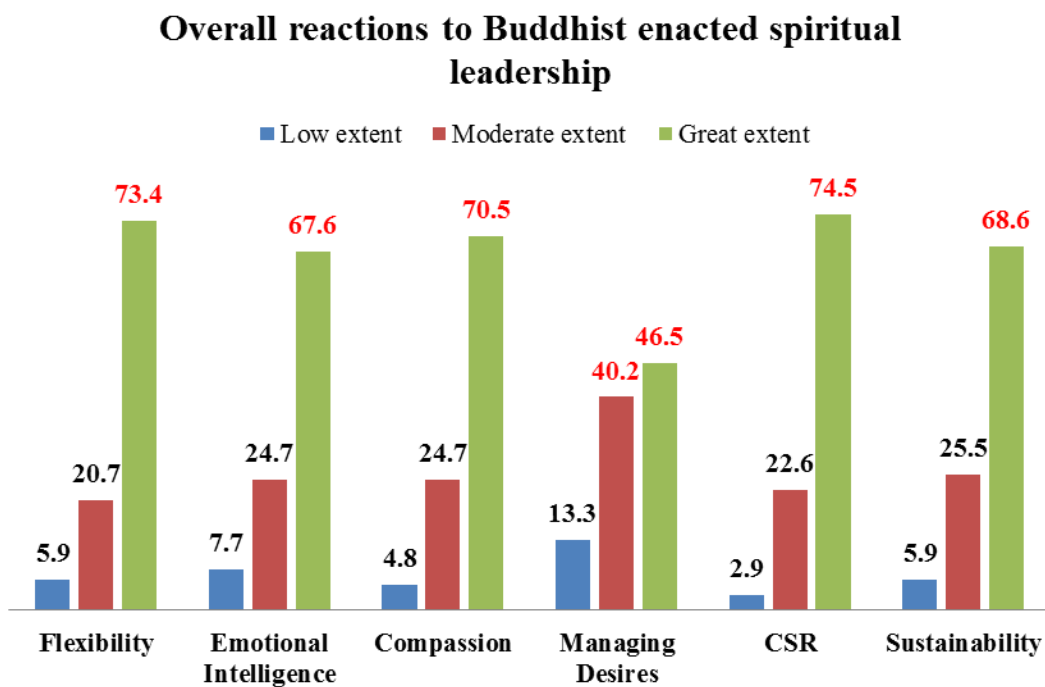


Figure 6. 2 Comparing overall reactions to Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership.
Note: The numbers represent percentages

The highest appreciation indicated was for leadership flexibility, compassion and social responsibility (above 70%). Leadership emotional intelligence and organizational sustainability also attained favourable responses, with over 65% responses acknowledging their presence at a

high level. Though leaders claimed that they were able to more effectively manage their desires due to their application of Buddhist practices, the overall responses from subordinates illustrate only a moderate acceptance. The underlying assumptions regarding such responses are analysed in the content analysis of open-ended questions. In summary, the characteristics of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership identified in the qualitative stage were endorsed.

6.5 Content analysis of open-ended questions

Open-ended questions in the survey served as an important way of gaining access to further information and providing explanations and interpretation of the survey results as well as for leadership and organizational improvements and development. Firstly, the open-ended questions for the questionnaire in the quantitative part concerning Buddhist-identified leadership characteristics, social responsibility and sustainability were analysed, followed by analysis of any further comments.

6.5.1 Employees' comments on leadership characteristics

In verifying the distinctive characteristics of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership identified in the qualitative phase, employees' opinions were sought on the role of context in their leaders' leadership styles. Employees were asked to evaluate and comment on leadership flexibility, emotional intelligence, compassion and managing desires. To further explore the outcomes of these leadership practices, employees were further asked about CSR, organizational sustainability and any other further comments they had. The content analysis of the open-ended questions reveals that the majority of employees acknowledged the role of context in shaping their leaders' leadership styles and the positive outcomes of such practices. However, some issues and concerns were also raised in their answers.

Respondents appreciated *leadership flexibility* in task delegation, employee management, business orientations and contextual responses. On the other hand, a few respondents (four) expressed different opinions. They found that sometimes their leaders were 'too professional' and could be over-critical sometimes. Others felt that there were cases when leadership

flexibility resulted in inconsistency and instability. Table 6.4 below displays the findings with representative data.

Table 6. 4 *Employees' Comments on Leadership Flexibility*

Task delegation	'Tasks are delegated based on different projects, contexts and teams. No fixed tasks are assigned to allow favorable conditions for employees to complete the tasks.' (<i>respondent in pharmaceutical industry</i>)
Managing people	'My leader listens carefully to employees and is always eager to learn new things from them. She has both hard and soft leadership skills and she knows employees well to delegate them to the right positions.' (<i>respondent in construction industry</i>)
Business orientations	'The flexibility of our leadership team is clearly demonstrated in how the company targets our main products. We have gone through three major changes in our product orientation: adding new prioritised pharmaceutical products in 2003–2004, in 2008–2009, and in 2015. Each transformation had significantly successful outcomes.' (<i>respondent in pharmaceutical industry</i>)
Contextual responses	'For example, when one of our clients made a mistake, my leader tried to find out the reasons of that mistake. He carefully analysed whether it was intentionally made or was unexpectedly caused due to external conditions to arrive at his final decision.' (<i>respondent in construction industry</i>)
Improvements needed	'There is no flexibility in updating administrative procedures and policies relevant to different circumstances of the business.' (<i>respondent in construction industry</i>)

In terms of leaders' *emotional intelligence*, overall, respondents felt that Buddhist-enacted leaders effectively controlled their emotions in different contexts and crisis situations and with different employees and customers, based on their different personalities and situations, representing a wise, tolerant and non-attached attitude. However, there were a few disagreements as well. For example, one respondent showed disapproval of how his/her leader is able to be emotionally stable and provided further suggestions on this issue. In the opinion of this respondent, even though the leader had previously shown emotional intelligence, the leader seemed ineffective in managing emotions when dealing with employees – especially in stating leader's own opinions on them. This reality highlights the fact that the collective culture of

Vietnam places importance on harmony within groups, thus, sometimes Vietnamese people are unwilling to accept criticism in life and at work. Table 6.5 below displays the findings.

Table 6. 5 *Employees' Comments on Leaders' Emotional Intelligence*

Crisis situations	‘For example, when we have crisis within organization in terms of workload or sales, our leader never shows signs of worriedness. Instead, she calmly seeks for causes to resolve the problems.’ <i>(respondent in printing industry)</i>
Responding to employees	‘One time, my leader had an unpleasant meeting with a regional officer before meeting with me. The regional officer refused to do an important task no matter how patient my leader was in explaining the importance of the task to him. However, when my leader met up with me, she did not show any signs of disappointment or unpleasantness. She had a normal and friendly chat with me on my work without complaining about the previous meeting with the regional officer.’ <i>(respondent in pharmaceutical industry)</i>
Responding to customers	‘With overreacting customers, my leader always finds the way to solve the situation effectively and appropriately.’ <i>(respondent in construction industry)</i>
Improvements needed	‘I agree that my leader has emotional intelligence, however, I do not agree that he can control his emotions effectively. For example, many times, he expresses his opinions on an employee with another employee. It is true that positive expressions can be a source of encouragement; however, he also mentions failures or negative things about that employee. It can break the united atmosphere among employees of the company. I have seen this happening in different departments and not just one time.’ <i>(respondent in education industry)</i>

Most employees valued leaders’ *compassionate attitudes* at work. Many of them shared that they received significant psychological and financial support from their leaders when they faced hard times, such as a family member passing away or in difficulty. By being compassionate, leaders came to know their employees better, which resulted in effective delegation and problem solving. A small number of respondents (3) on the other hand felt that relationships in the workplace are more about responsibility. This signals the existence of complex and different perceptions among different individuals in workplaces. Table 6.6 below shows some respondents’ opinions.

Table 6. 6 *Employees' Comments on Compassionate Leadership*

Responding to employees	'My CEO always respects and encourages her followers to express and share their opinions, even though sometimes their opinions can be wrong.' (<i>respondent in printing industry</i>)
Task delegation	'My leader understands his employees' psychology and emotions, thus he is very effective in delegating the right and suitable tasks, responsibility and position for us.' (<i>respondent in construction industry</i>)
Responding to context	'In my case, during when my new born child was under one-year-old, my leader always supported me in terms of flexible working time and workload so that I could do my job properly as an employee and as a mother.' (<i>respondent in medical sector</i>)
Improvements needed	'I cannot acknowledge compassionate behavior in our company as everything is bound to work and role responsibility.' (<i>respondent in a service industry</i>)

In the qualitative phase, another distinctive characteristic of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership emerged – the *ability to manage desires* and as skilful means. In commenting on such characteristics, employees revealed that they admired how leaders were able to give their personal time and show interest to encourage them. They appreciated leaders' willingness in taking responsibility in relation to incomplete tasks and in helping employees out financially. Table 6.7 below illustrates these findings.

Table 6. 7 *Employees' Comments on Leaders' Ability to Manage Desires*

Compromising personal time	'One time my CEO spent a long time in helping me to realise my mistakes for improvement through phone or Skype conversation, sometimes late at night. She could have used this time to take rest, but she was willing to spend it to help me out.' (<i>respondent in the printing industry</i>)
Compromising personal interest	'My leader was willing to participate in our company vacation in the location of our choice rather than her preferred one.' (<i>respondent in education sector</i>)
Compromising financial pursuits	'Apart from our main printing contracts, our leader seeks for other printing opportunities even though such jobs may not bring profit for the company. The main purpose of our leader is to create more jobs and earnings for employees even if it means she has to compromise the company's financial pursuits.' (<i>respondent in printing industry</i>)
Willingness to take responsibility	'My leader always shares the responsibility with employees in failed or unsuccessful projects.' (<i>respondent in construction industry</i>)

On the other hand, a number of employees (31) made interesting comments on how they did not see genuine intention in managing desires, which correlates with the finding in the earlier statistical analysis of the moderate assessment of leaders' ability in managing desires. For example, one respondent in the printing industry provided an extensive example of this:

I feel that in many cases the way our leader tries to appear generous with us eventually serves his agenda or pursuits. I do not agree that when we are provided free time out of working hours to practise meditation as suggested by our leader is needed. Many of my peers have become obsessed with meditation; they took extended time off out of the allowed free working hours, resulting in the fact that I have to do twice as much as I used to. Also, by having many of my colleagues promoting this style of working space with meditation, our leader has become well-known by many people.

Another respondent from a service industry also highlighted how financial assistance from leaders might become a burden to employees:

I would appreciate if you would not distribute this comment to any member of my organization: I am very thankful for my leader when he helped me out financially, not asking for any repayments when a family member of mine passed away. However, ever

since, I found it very difficult to say ‘no’ to him. I even find it harder to raise my disapproval on some issues. I feel that I have to meet his expectations.

In both the above cases, respondents seem to imply the instrumental aspects of their leaders’ leadership style using meditation and generosity. Respondents had concerns over the real intentions of their leaders, which sometimes raised questions for them about their leaders and made them feel ‘stuck in the middle’ as a result of receiving favours and assistance from their leaders. This is not to say that the intentions of such generosity were not appreciated. Respondents did acknowledge this, only in some cases respondents were skeptical about leaders’ intentions.

This illustrates how many Vietnamese people have become vulnerable in gaining trust in a corrupted country. It has become a habit for them to question actions and perceive favors as reciprocity. It is hard to tell from the above examples whether leaders have genuine generosity or not. In the following comment, for example, it is clear that leaders’ expect effective work, but according to one respondent in the construction industry, it is an unsettling but fair expectation:

Our CEO extended our summer vacation last year for extra three days, however, he expected all of us to return fresh and work extra hard. When we came back, we were still in the holiday mood, which made our leader become upset, resulting in him setting out strict rules onwards. We all felt shocked, but I think it is fair enough.

This highly-contextual response illustrates the distinct reaction in Vietnam when people have been hurt and affected psychologically by the misleading communist ideology, as discussed in the literature review. This effect therefore may have contributed to the low level of agree responses for hope/faith variables in the SLT survey and the moderate level of appreciation towards leaders’ ability to manage desires.

It is apparent from the findings that there is overall agreement on the distinctive leadership characteristics from the employees’ perspective that emerged from qualitative phase. The findings reinforce the salient role of context in leadership practices. However, employees also disclosed areas of weakness in their leaders in leadership flexibility, emotional intelligence,

compassion, and managing desires. This reality highlights how challenging the actual practice of Buddhism is in a contemporary context, especially when it challenges human habits, perceptions and self-transformation. Additionally, the trust issues that people have in the Communist region of the country also begs for more effort from leaders to win trust and respect from employees and customers.

6.5.2 Employees' comments on CSR and Sustainability

In responding to the outcomes of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership, most employees (211) felt that their companies did a good job in contributing to society and the environment. No respondent mentioned financial responsibility though, which is quite different from how leaders stated finance as their skilful means. Employees felt that their organizations were more socially oriented, aiming for social sustainability by building up a sustainable business model with sustainable products, investing in people development, and prioritising customers and clients, while paying attention to socially engaged activities. Table 6.8 shows the main findings from the employees' perspective:

Table 6. 8 *Employees' Comments on CSR and Sustainability*

Corporate Social Responsibility	
Social responsibility	'My company has shared the loss of the flood victims in central part of the country, in <i>Bình Định</i> and <i>Nghệ An</i> , by going into the flooding areas to examine the health of the victims and deliver medicines for free. Our aim is to help and guide the victims to be able to take care of their health and possible infectious diseases when living in flooding areas.'
Environmental responsibility	'Because of the nature of our business in construction, our leader has proactively cooperated with professional and trustworthy suppliers and partners to be able to deliver safe and quality products that can satisfy customers while at the same time can protect the environment and neighboring surroundings.'
Sustainability	
Sustainable business model	'The company's business model is based on innovation and creativity to meet the ongoing demands of our customers and society; and to maintain our long-term goal in contributing to Vietnam's primary educational system.'
Sustainable development	'Our company pays a lot of attention to employee training to make sure that they are updated with the needed latest skills and technology to improve our printing business.'
Sustainable products and services	'We are trying to diversify our distribution of quality pharmaceutical products to make them available to a larger number of customers from different backgrounds, especially those with low income. We also provide free public workshops online to make sure that everyone has access and can ask information about our products to improve their health.'

Most employees shared leaders' views in the qualitative phase. Interestingly, while employees did acknowledge leaders' ability to manage desires in compromising their financial needs for greater purposes as skilful means, they did not have much comment on financial responsibility or sustainability of their organizations. This may be because no public disclosure had been made on this issue that reached subordinate levels; thus they have had limited access to this source of information. One other possibility may also be because leaders preferred not to reveal the means they used for their personal Buddhist practices.

6.5.3 Additional comments of employees

Apart from the above comments on leadership flexibility, emotional intelligence, compassion and ability to manage desires, a great number of employees shared their appreciation of how leaders were helpful in employee coaching, knowledge sharing to inspire and motivate employees, and in using soft skills in responding to employees' contextual needs and situations. Particularly, employees felt that they had benefited significantly, both professionally and personally, from their wise leaders. One employee stated that: 'My leader usually warned me that it is unethical to promote our products as more premium than they actually are. Only say the truth about our products, including its shortcomings and drawbacks.' Many employees defined their leaders as '*có tâm*' (leadership with heart).

An overwhelming number of employees (198) commented positively on the working environment, conditions and sense of membership within their organizations. They highlighted the friendly and sociable relationships among employees that made them feel like they were their second family. Many of them embraced social activities, apart from their professional tasks, saying that these had contributed to their psychological development. Other things they liked about their organizations include the organizations' socially oriented missions and attentiveness and awareness of employee well-being. These findings endorse leaders' expressions of employee membership and calling identified in the first phase of the study.

However, employees have also identified areas for improvement. Overall, they wanted to see better packages of compensation and benefits, especially financial ones. This was probably the reason for the moderately low levels of agree responses for organizational outcomes, including productivity, life satisfaction, and organizational commitment in the SLT survey. This may also be the reason why there was only a moderate level of appreciation of leaders' ability to manage desires. Respondents felt that leaders could show this ability more effectively by directly improving employees' compensation and benefits. Others suggested improvements in handling administrative procedures by adapting software to save time in task categorisation and delegation. Some also proposed more effective and supportive communication channels among leaders and members:

I hope our CEO can improve his style of leading. For example, he should be more willing to listen to employees when there is a problem and concentrate on guiding employees to solve it rather than drowning into philosophical teachings. Such teachings are not too late and can still be taught after the incident has been resolved.

This once again shows that even though non-attachment is one of the most important Buddhist principles perceived by leaders, in practice it is far from easy to execute. It is evident in this example that even a good intention to educate employees can convey a negative message that is not welcomed by the recipients. Furthermore, though employees were in praise of the friendly working atmosphere of their organizations, they expected to see more professional working spaces and environments with more cooperation and peer support among employees. One employee suggested a teambuilding activity as a solution:

There should be more in-house cultural exchange events within the company to unite members that can be captured by the PR department to preserve such images and memories in each development phase of the organization. Such images can be educational and informative to new comers as well as can be an effective mean to spread the ‘family’ atmosphere within the company.

This suggestion indicates that besides leadership inspiration, employees play a crucial role in creating a sense of membership that needs to be addressed more attentively.

A number of employees (26) were concerned about the direction of their company’s development, the less well-known public image of their company regardless of its social contribution, and the loose managerial control. The less well-known public image is understandable because, as mentioned earlier, Buddhist practice is more a personal and humble choice. However, this might be a reason, together with the low level of trust embedded in the Vietnamese people’s lifestyle, for the low levels of agreement in the SLT survey in having hope and faith. Surprisingly, although employees mentioned their support for leadership flexibility in the previous section, some (17) thought that such flexibility resulting in loose management was not effective. Such a comment indicates sensitivity to context, which is part of a leadership transformation process that cannot be achieved overnight. However, employees’ proposal for a

more transparent and informative direction of company development confirms the weakness in communication channels of some of the organizations.

In summary, employees were supportive of their leaders' leadership styles. Their comments further elaborate on the challenges associated with embedding Buddhist principles in leadership practices. The self-transformation process of such practices represents a long-term process which is far from complete at this stage. The 'context' element involved in the process is complex, diverse and unforeseeable, which tests leadership skills. Therefore, reflecting back and dealing with shortcomings, such as communication channels, instrumentality, the loss of trust among the society, attachment-related issues and contextual complexity, and even failures at some points, are learning opportunities for leadership transformation.

Part III – Summary of empirical findings

The empirical findings from this study reflect how the unique Vietnamese context has influenced the life and perceptions of the Vietnamese people, resulting in their psychological vulnerability. Within this context, the research findings indicate how spiritual leadership efforts have been made in response to the overall impact of the misguided Communist regime in the country. Such efforts are well received by employees, with some positive organizational outcomes. Findings suggest the need for further development of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership practices as well as the need for further exploration of how the Vietnamese context has seriously jeopardised the nation's belief systems.

Organizational leaders in this study, as Buddhist practitioners, have reaffirmed Thích Thanh Từ's comment on Buddhist practice in Vietnam (Tu Tam Hoang, 2000, p. 32–33):

... nowadays it's so pitiful as we have seen at many places and temples, people just have belief, not the wisdom. They believe that by offering to the Buddha, they will gain his blessings and prostrating to him will return merits. Whatever they do, they rely on the Buddha for his blessings and protection. When they suffer with the disturbance of greed, hatred, and ignorance, they visit the temple and pray to the Buddha so that he could clear their afflictions. They [rely] on the Buddha for everything. They do not practice, but ask

or pray to the Buddha for free giving. Do they practice wisdom or belief? If it's a belief, then there is no wisdom. And if it is not the wisdom then there's no enlightenment.

The many layers of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership practices therefore generally reflect self-transformation based on wisdom development, mindfulness practices, and the principles of non-attachment in delivering good leadership practices and to attain positive organizational outcomes. Leadership vision, mission, purpose, faith and altruistic love all reflected such principles in one way or another. The application of such leadership practices is delivered as skilful means, emphasising the salient role of context, which introduced the following distinctive Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership characteristics: leadership flexibility, leadership emotional intelligence, leadership compassion, leadership ability to manage desires, and social responsibility and sustainability orientations.

In terms of spirituality, the Buddhist practices embedded in leadership skills and styles found in this study resemble secular Buddhism but not as a 'subtraction story' (what is left when you take away religion) (Taylor, 2007) – they represent secularism and a different way of thinking, as follows (Soucy, 2016; Taylor, 2011):

- (1) Personal commitment or faith through self-transformation;
- (2) Disenchantment and a non-transcendent approach in perceiving and applying Buddhist principles as psychological and scientific means to explore and explain the world as naturally as it is, rather than depending on rituals to seek for divine assistance in improving worldly troubles or situations;
- (3) A departure from superstition and false Buddhism in articulating consciousness and wisdom;
- (4) A supremely individual practice for self-development, rather than having impact on family through the generation of good luck or merit;
- (5) A way of thinking with an atheistic orientation.

It is in the belief of Buddhist-enacted leaders that the Buddhahood (*quả vị Phật*) can only be achieved by a consistent individual effort, self-transformation and practice, not by giving offerings to spirits, the Buddha or ancestors as 'merit-making' (*công đức*), and asking for happiness, prosperity and longevity (*phúc lộc thọ*). As for business, it takes skilful leadership to win over followers rather than aiming at relationships based on reciprocity.

Following a critical-realist grounded-theory approach, the findings of this study revealed the role of context in manifesting Buddhist-enacted leadership practices in a number of ways. They reveal the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership from the leaders' perspective, providing an explanation of the mechanisms and contextual factors in the transitional context shaping such leadership practices. The findings indicate leaders' lived experiences in the way they manifest Buddhist-enacted leadership through their maturity in Buddhist practices, life experiences and how they have applied some principles, such as skillful means and impermanence, in responding to ethical dilemmas. An example of this is institutional bribery.

Diving deep into the context also revealed institutional and social powers such as the low level of trust within the contemporary Vietnamese context. This informs a rising movement in applying Buddhism and spirituality in daily life in the form of engaged Buddhism in general and leadership practice in particular. The drawbacks of spiritualism and some feudal Confucian values also contribute to the rising engaged-Buddhist practices in Vietnam. These contextual factors helped to develop an integrative story of the enactment of spiritual leadership practices from a Buddhist perspective, providing practicable explanations of how the enactment of Buddhism in leadership influenced leadership hope/faith, vision leading to Buddhist-inspired altruistic love to generate calling, and membership in organizations.

In responding for the need to examine spiritual leadership from multiple sources as a result of the preliminary quantitative phase, Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics were also examined from employees' perspectives based on their lived experiences and through participative observations. Through a triangulation of different data and methods, the findings of this study have been able to illustrate and unpack the complex nature of the transitional context in shaping the phenomenon of spiritual leadership as practised in the context of engaged Buddhism.

The discussion chapter presents a comprehensive and more critical analysis and discussion, with reference to the relevant literature, to highlight the contributions and responses to the research question.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings in the previous chapter in relation to the relevant literature and the research questions: ‘How do spiritual leaders interpret and enact Buddhist teachings and principles in organizations in the context of Vietnam?’

The chapter is divided into six main parts: (1) understanding the Vietnamese context; (2) the demonstration of Buddhist-enacted leadership through Buddhist principles and concepts; (3) outcomes of Buddhist-enacted leadership and its impacts on employee well-being (4) Buddhist-enacted leadership in comparison to non-Buddhist spiritual leadership; (5) lessons from Buddhist-enacted leadership; and (6) a final summary of spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective.

7.1 Distinctive characteristics of the Vietnamese context

In examining the application of Buddhist principles in leadership in Vietnam from leaders’ and employees’ perspectives, both the *inner context*¹⁹ and the *outer context*²⁰ have been found to show significant impacts on how leaders choose specific Buddhist principles to foster their leadership adaptiveness and on how employees respond to such applications. Findings revealed that the unique outer context of Vietnam shapes employees’ expectations and leadership choices in forming Buddhist-enacted leadership practices. The author first considers the impact of context in this study.

7.1.1 Skepticism and lack of trust in the context of Vietnam

The findings of this research show that both leaders and employees express significant levels of distrust and skepticism in the Vietnamese society. In the opinion of Buddhist practitioners as leaders, this lack of trust is a ‘causal effect’ (*nhân quả*) of the failed implementation of a genuine Communist ideology within the country, leading to rising Buddhist spiritual movements in the

¹⁹ Both the hard medium of visible organizational structure and the soft medium of organizational culture vary between organizations (Greenhalgh et al., 2005).

²⁰ Factors beyond organizational control such as social systems, law and the environment.

country. Employees are also aware of the complex context of Vietnam and show identical responses but have become more skeptical of organizational means and ends.

Ironically, Vietnam is regarded as a country wherein economic relationships and in business-related activities is strongly dependent on trust (Nguyen et al., 2005; Scheela & Nguyen, 2001). Even with traditional values adopted from *guanxi* (Redding, 1990; Xin & Pearce, 1996; Yang, 1994), reciprocal obligations do not necessarily lead to trust. Trust is based on mutual confidence in openness and honesty but not on obligations (Nguyen & Rose, 2009). The lack of openness and honesty has adversely affected the trust and beliefs associated with people's obligations to fulfill the Party's institutional requests as a consequence of misguided implementation of a genuine Communist ideology (Abuza, 2002; Thayer, 2008).

According to the respondent leaders, the three reasons for the increasing interest in a newly strengthened Buddhist movement in the country are based on people's skepticism. Firstly, the 'causal effect' of 'trust issues' has created the need for a spiritual 'shield' among the Vietnamese whereby people generate their own trust, beliefs and hope. Though Vietnam has a long tradition of following Confucian values as a remnant of Chinese rule and its own traditional spiritual practices, in contemporary contexts these values have become feudal (*phong kiến*) and are no longer sophisticated enough to deal with complex contextual challenges (Leshkovich, 2006, p. 298). The Vietnamese people have not yet found answers to the purpose of life in general and to personal purposes in particular in the chaotic context of Vietnam. In Buddhism, they tend to find philosophical and practical approaches that are applicable to different contexts for eliminating suffering. The contemporary Buddhist movement has been developing significantly recently through the power of word-of-mouth (*truyền miệng*), identifiable in the country's collectivist culture.

Secondly, because of the 'corrupted' communist ideology in Vietnam, organizations and leaders in particular are facing dilemmas associated with 'lobbying' activities, tricky 'relationships' (*quan hệ*) with state officials, and hidden agendas of business partners. In Vietnam, 'relationships' in the corporate world are essential (Meyer et al., 2006; Scheela & Nguyen, 2001) and they are expected to be nurtured and taken care of in various forms on a continuous basis.

The bureaucratic and corrupt situation in Vietnam, especially in the state-owned sector, is mainly based on relationships (*quan hệ*): on how well one knows or treats officials at the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Health, and so on. This kind of relationship is maintained based on how often and how well organizations ‘take care’ of the relevant officials with financial gifts in different forms, such as vacation and shopping vouchers. Such a culture creates unrest and stress for leaders in surviving in the country’s competitive and demanding business environment. As a result, many leaders find Buddhist principles such as non-attachment (*không bám chấp*), cause-and-effect (*nhân quả*), impermanence (Pāli: *anicca*; Sanskrit: *anitya*) (*vô thường*), mindfulness (Pāli: *sati*; Sanskrit: *smṛti*) (*chánh niệm*) are effective and adaptable principles in handling the complexities of the Vietnamese context.

Thirdly, Buddhism provides useful analytical tools for leaders to examine problems and see the underlying assumptions of such problems for effective decision-making or solutions. Principles of ‘causal effect’ and perceptions of levels of truths – ultimate truth (Sanskrit: *paramārtha-satya*; Pāli: *paramattha sacca*) – (*sự thật tuyệt đối*) and conventional truth (Sanskrit: *samvṛti-satya*; Pāli: *sammuti sacca*) – (*sự thật tương đối*) are essential to develop keen observation and to deal with tricky customers in highly analytical professions and in the complex relationship-oriented culture of Vietnam. Understanding the universe and underlying assumptions of causes may reveal other aspects involved in the problem rather than just the surface of it and may provide a better overall picture of the context. It is especially valuable at workplaces where there are diverse players or stakeholders. Thus, causes disclose the nature and characteristics of the problem, the context and the people involved. They stimulate both situational understanding and internal self-perception in a more rigorous way, which is much needed in contemporary business milieu.

However, the newly reinforced Buddhist movement in the country has three major problems that have affected the implementation of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices and employees’ attitudes within organizations.

First, it is evident that superstitious beliefs are mingled with Buddhist practices in the form of commercialisation of Buddhist practices as acts of reciprocal relationships between the

supernatural and the people themselves. The lack of trust in society and institutionalised Buddhist reform in the country have led to false Buddhist practices and the idea that, by praying for the Buddha, one can be happy and lucky in their daily life. Respondents stated that most Vietnamese people believe that, by giving offerings, namely on the first and fifteenth days of the month (lunar calendar), burning items made of cardboard or paper (*đốt vàng mã*) for ancestors, they may receive blessings (*lộc*) in return, resulting in a reciprocal relationship with both the supernatural and people. This has significantly affected the right perception of Buddhism in the country that may result in chaos rather than relief. This problem begs for the right interpretation of Buddhist practices.

By stating these arguments, respondents expressed similar opinions to Soucy's (2016) in emphasising self-reliance of Buddhist orthodoxies in Vietnam as a right practice rather than considering Buddha as part of supernatural relationships. Some respondents expressed frustration with the religious practices of Vietnamese Buddhism that have long been embedded in the culture of the nation as a sign of a decline in Buddhism (Devido, 2007). Such practices described by respondents and by Soucy (2012, 2016) are interactions with spirits in possession rituals (*lên đồng*) to gain support for daily life endeavours, the conducting of fortune-telling sessions (*xem bói*) to avoid future negative outcomes, engagement with the dead in terms of both ghosts and ancestors (*cúng giải hạn*) to ensure protection from negative outcomes and to make sure that ancestors 'receive what they need' in their afterlives, and the overemphasis on Buddhist pilgrimage (*hành hương*) for merit-making (*công đức*) purposes.

Second, there is lack of criticality in Vietnamese culture. While the ability to be critical in questioning statements, propositions and information and being critical of social structures, values and rationalities in society (Habermas, 1993; Harnden 1996) exist among educated Vietnamese, the less educated population is more willing to accept information provided by elderly people, teachers and parents without doubting it in order to maintain friendly relationships and prestige (Biggs, 1996; Jin & Contazzi, 1997; Chang & Chin, 1999). These are the values adopted from Confucius, which are clearly ineffective in contemporary contexts.

Lastly, the collective word-of-mouth culture in Vietnam can sometimes create more harm than use among less educated people. In the case of popularising superstitious beliefs, it has been extremely negative. Buddhist-enacted leaders therefore have highlighted how the complex social conditions in Vietnam and a lack of trust have created opportunities for increasing acknowledgement of Buddhist practices.

The unique culture of contemporary Vietnamese, therefore, plays a salient role in forming the perceptions of leaders and employees and leadership practices.

7.1.2 Contextualising suffering and meaningfulness in Vietnam

Leader respondents believe that suffering is part of life and is part of the formation of meaningfulness. Therefore, rather than fighting against suffering when it is caused externally (out of our control), it is wiser to look at it in a more positive way by turning suffering into a contextual opportunity for meaningful self-transformation, subject to conditions of the context. These responses reflect what McGonigal (2015) considers as a ‘stress paradox’: ‘Happy lives are not stress-free, nor does a stress-free life guarantee happiness... stress seems to be an inevitable consequence of pursuing goals that feed our sense of purpose.’ Leaders share the view of Frankl (1959, 1968) in understanding that, while suffering is an objective phenomenon that can never be positive, the meaning derived from it subjectively can be positive as ‘a uniquely human potential at its best’ (p. 135) and the ultimate human freedom to choose the appropriate attitude when things cannot be changed.

Understanding meaningfulness, in the opinion of Buddhist-enacted leaders, has to come from understanding suffering and its causes. A number of respondents personally witnessed the Vietnam War, the renovation period of the country and how the country suffered not only from the war but also from a regime desperate to rebuild the country in the aftermath – resulting in misguided ideologies. They expressed ‘peace’ as a relative truth and that social ills have existed in the country, whether in wartime or peacetime. Therefore, they have learnt to find meaningfulness in different contexts. Having high expectations and pursuits for meaningfulness sometimes can even be counterproductive in attaining true meaningfulness. The concept of non-

attachment here informs us that suffering is a result of clinging to desires. Non-attachment stimulates a more contextually flexible attitude that is evident in the way respondents create workplace meaningfulness. In this study, meaningfulness is about how well leaders combine compassion (*karuṇā*) (*từ bi*) and wisdom (Sanskrit: *prajñā*; Pāli: *paññā*) in their leadership practices flexibly without fixity to any perceived ideologies or assumptions. The state of meaningfulness is also subject to change, according to the concept of impermanence. These perceptions correlate with recent studies by Bailey and Madden (2016, 2017) indicating that meaningfulness arises in ‘transcendent moments in time’ and is not a sustained state of being.

In the opinion of Buddhist-enacted leaders, wisdom is a crucial factor in perceiving meaningfulness. A wise individual may find meaningfulness from various aspects of life and in diverse workplace contexts. Wisdom itself is articulated from personal life experience including failures and suffering. For Buddhist-enacted leaders, wisdom reflects what Driver (2007) regards as suffering experiences from which personal meaning may be drawn. It is a self-learning and self-transformation process, as meaning attained from suffering cannot be created for another person but by the one who is experiencing suffering (Lukas, 1986).

There are multiple sources of meaningfulness in which context plays a crucial role. Nevertheless, the state of meaningfulness is not static and it requires skilfulness to identify causal effects and act with flexibility in pursuing approaches that are contextually sensitive. The findings in this study revealed a number of Buddhist practices applicable in the Vietnamese context, subject to their suitability to the right audience. In all cases, non-attachment and the Middle Way approach are the fundamental triggers, both to promote dynamic ways of attaining meaningfulness and to let go of such pursuits when necessary.

7.1.3 Distinctive spiritual practices in Vietnam

Spirituality in Vietnam has its own national identity. According to spiritual leaders who are non-Buddhist practitioners, many traditional practices still exist today. These leaders themselves express their own beliefs and faith through spiritual forms of having traditional worshiping altars (*bàn thờ cúng*) at home or at their workplaces to honor the god of the earth and guardian spirits

(*thổ địa*) and the god of wealth or fortune (*thần tài*) to protect homes and workplaces from bad luck or evil spirits. Other than that, spiritual practices such as the veneration of ancestors (*thờ cúng tổ tiên*), Mother Goddesses of the Four Palaces (*Đạo Mẫu Tứ Phủ*) through ‘going into trance rituals’ (*lên đồng*) and the services of mediums (*hầu đồng*) are considered as part of Vietnamese national culture and identity (*bản sắc văn hóa dân tộc*) (Lauser, 2008; Ngô, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006; Endres, 2011). These spiritual practices are forms of *spiritualism* rather than spirituality, as they encompass contact with spirits and psychic phenomena (Nelson, 2009).

Having said that, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist respondents share the view that some of the practices, especially the remnants from Chinese rule, reflect backwardness (*lạc hậu*), feudalism (*phong kiến*), and superstition (*mê tín*) in contemporary contexts. Some traditional spiritual practices in Vietnam reflect ‘superstition, nostalgia or exoticism rather than a rational means to cope with the impositions of modern life’ (Dickhardt & Lauser, 2016, p. 3). It is, however, worth noting that in Vietnam religion (*tôn giáo*) and folk beliefs (*tín ngưỡng dân gian*) are different from superstitious beliefs (*mê tín dị đoan*). Folk beliefs are still considered acceptable in the current Communist regime (Dickhardt & Lauser, 2016, p. 12) and reflect Vietnamese cultural values. Some Buddhist leaders claim spiritual practices as sources contributing to the formation of the nation’s misguided ideology. Therefore, the term ‘spirituality’ in the mindset of most respondents remains controversial, and they express their belief systems more as philosophical viewpoints rather than as religious or spiritual ones.

Clearly, trust issues within the Vietnamese context have influenced people’s interpretation of what is considered practical in the contemporary context. As a result, the Vietnamese have become more cautious towards traditional spiritual, folk traditions, religious practices and rituals.

7.1.4 Buddhism through the lens of Vietnamese practitioners: a philosophical approach of life

This study reveals that there is a difference in how Buddhist practitioners interpret spirituality and religion and between the interpretations of spiritual leaders who are non-Buddhist in the context of Vietnam and Western interpretations.

Most Buddhist practitioners in the study do not consider themselves as spiritual. For them, Buddhism is more about a philosophical view of life that helps the practitioner to avoid illusions by understanding the truths of the universe. In other words, Buddhism is a practice about learning to see the world as it is. On the other hand, spiritual leaders who are non-Buddhist express their spirituality as a combination of philosophical viewpoints and the appreciation of some traditional spiritual practices, such as having altars in their offices to honor the god of the earth and guardian spirits (*thổ địa*) and the god of wealth or fortune (*thần tài*). To put it differently, spirituality in Vietnam includes a selective number of traditional ritual practices, which spiritual leaders see as appropriate in the contemporary context. However, in the opinion of Buddhist-enacted leaders, the real practice of Buddhism is not about rituals but more about self-reflection and self-transformation. Self-transformation identified in the interviews also reflects cause and effect in spirituality, since faith can be a driver for moral development and personal growth, especially when needed for transformational leadership (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Buddhism differs from spiritual understanding that involves a sense of mystery (Roof, 1999), with inner life oriented toward God, the supernatural or the sacred (Yamane, 1998). Spiritual practices in Vietnam, on the other hand, do include rituals embracing the sacred, similar to the view that spiritual leaders share in general. However, there are a few respondents who still consider Buddhism as a spiritual practice, which resonates with Cacioppe's (2000) opinion that spirituality is inward-looking compared to religion with its external focus, and the view that spirituality is accessible to everyone regardless of whether they are religious or not (Gill, 2011, p. 314). Buddhism correlates with the conceptualisation of spirituality in terms of developing ways of understanding and connecting with the oneself and others, inner awareness and personal integration (Becker, 2001; Graber & Johnson, 2001; Ingersoll, 1994; Macinnes, 2003; Tillich, 1958; Roof, 1999).

On the other hand, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist spiritual leaders consider themselves as non-religious. Though Buddhism is considered as one of the five main religions in the world, and it is still known as a religion by the majority in Vietnam, Buddhist practitioners see it differently.

According to most Buddhist respondents, Buddhism is misinterpreted in Vietnam and is confused with religious rituals as an instrument of superstitious practices and a shield for avoiding bad luck. As Buddhist practitioners, they understand that each individual is no different from the Buddha, an ordinary man seeking truth through life experiences, not by creating belief systems through superstitious practices. They share the view that Buddhism is an ethical system, a way of life and an epistemological way of thinking (Cooper & James, 2005; Daniels, 1998; Johansen & Gopalakrishna, 2006; Marques, 2010) and that the Buddha's community was actually educational, not religious (Mikulas, 2007). Practices under the umbrella of 'religion' are perceived as superstitious in Vietnam. As a result, spiritual respondents do not consider themselves religious in a belief that spirituality is not superstitious but embrace good practices in life, including honoring ancestors.

In general, Buddhism – a practice that involves truth-seeking in both the outer universe and the inner self – is considered by respondents to be more a philosophy or a scientific spirituality than merely spirituality or religion. In terms of scientific spirituality, respondents share the view of Rao (2017) that, in Buddhism, the state of ego-transcendence or 'emptiness' (Sanskrit: *Śūnyatā*; Pāli: *Suññatā*) involves the exercise of transformation of the human condition similar to how science leads to technology development. It involves intellectual knowledge and the articulation of wisdom, not mysterious pursuits. Depending on the intellectuality of both creators and users, developments in technology can be either useful or harmful, just as spirituality can be interpreted as a form of either commodification or authenticity. Thus, for Buddhist-enacted leaders, the practice of Buddhism is determined by the wisdom of the practitioners and scientific explanations.

Another factor contributing to this perception and interpretation of respondents is the overall contemporary context of Vietnam. The one-party policy under a corrupted Communist ideology in the transitional context of Vietnam today is being compared to the 'obsolete, corrupt, and feudal characteristics' of corrupt mandarins and village notables called as 'class of feudal lords' (Endres, 2002, p. 305–313). These class of feudal lords' main task is to maintain power and cultural cadres in a 'class society' during the Vietnamese feudal era. Within the 'class of feudal lords', spiritualism and religious folk rituals were effective tools to manipulate the lower classes

and to create the lords' cultural cadres. Therefore, in the transitional contemporary context of Vietnam, where the Party has obsolete ruling power in health, education, and all aspects of the country, the Vietnamese are skeptical and have become more selective in including spiritual, religious or folk rituals and practices in their lives. Since their belief systems have become vulnerable in this setting, spirituality, spiritualism and religiosity have all become sensitive concepts in Vietnam.

In summary, while the preliminary quantitative study testing Fry's spiritual leadership in the context of Vietnam was not able to reveal either contextual factors that impact on the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices or the validity of constructs such as hope/faith and the practice of 'inner life' referring to mindfulness practices, the critical-realist grounded-theory approach was able to unpack the role of context in Buddhist-enacted leadership practices. Hope/faith is a relatively weak predictor for leadership vision in the spiritual leadership model tested in the context of Vietnam but highlights concerns over issues of 'faith' or spirituality.

First, the existence of many forms of spiritualism, folk practices and feudal spiritual belief systems has created confusion for the Vietnamese people, apart from the fact that many of these practices are unduly feudal and superstitious in the contemporary context. Second, the dominant one-party policy, with its drawbacks, especially resulting in institutional bribery and an opaque business environment, has impacted on people's belief systems. These factors have contributed to a low level of trust within the Vietnamese context as expressed by both leaders and employees in this study. Even though an engaged-Buddhist movement in the country has recently emerged as a replacement for spiritualism and many superstitious spiritual practices in the country, there is still skepticism in its application, both in daily life and in leadership. This is not a surprising outcome because the process of trust repair is not something that can be rushed, especially when mechanisms to restore trust involve both social and institutional efforts (Bachmann et al., 2015). The following sections explain in more detail how context has challenged Buddhist-enacted leadership and how leaders faced and tackled such challenges through the adaptation of Buddhist principles in leadership.

7.2 Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics

The following leadership model (Figure 5.1) demonstrates the findings of this study in responding to the main research question of *'How do leaders interpret and enact Buddhist teachings and principles in organizations in the context of Vietnam?'* in terms of five main leadership characteristics: compassion, flexibility, emotional intelligence, social orientation, and ability to manage desires. The model adopts a circular shape to illustrate the changing nature of a wheel, just like the changing nature of context. The core of the model is based on context. The model has four layers:

1. The ***first layer*** of the wheel reflects the core of Buddhist-enacted leadership – context that forms leadership responses and practices.
2. The ***second layer*** (innermost circle after context) reflects leadership responses and approaches to context.
3. The ***third layer*** of the wheel presents the selection of available Buddhist principles (listed by respondents) applicable for the second and fourth layers of the wheel, based on their appropriateness to the context. This serves as an underlying pool of principles for the second and fourth layers to choose from.
4. The ***fourth layer*** (the outermost layer) of the wheel demonstrates the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics.

The figure illustrates a 'skilful means' approach of leadership based on context diagnoses and formulating the choice of 'right' mindfulness and 'right' leadership identity that are needed to apply the applicable Buddhist principles and qualities that stimulate appropriate leadership characteristics in response to contextual challenges. Among the five characteristics, compassion and flexibility are highlighted as the most effectively applied characteristics in this research.



Figure 7. 1 Model of Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics.

The following sections unpack in detail the first, second and fourth layers' impacts on Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics and demonstrates how the second layer is applied in forming the nature of those characteristics.

7.2.1 Context

Context is central in forming Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics and practices. Leadership needs to be unpacked in local contexts as 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1994; Salazar, 2005) to develop descriptive leadership-in-context concepts (Vargo, 2009). In this study, there are three fundamental contextual factors influencing Buddhist-enacted leaders' behaviours and leadership styles.

The first contextual factor affecting leaders' behaviour is the observed *suffering from the Vietnamese social context*. Such suffering includes the impact of poor governance of the Communist central government (which continues to hold supreme power), the heavily bureaucratic and opaque government officials, corporate greed emphasising profit and personal wealth together with a lack of regulatory control, the overemphasis on profitable 'quick fix' business (*chộp giật*), the lack of a sustainable and long-term business orientation, and the existence of skepticism in general. In responding to 'suffering' within society and its business industries, Buddhist-enacted leaders incorporate Buddhism in promoting their leadership vision, whilst spiritual but non-Buddhist leaders initiate more socially and community oriented visions. Amidst such context, vision is crucial for leaders, but it is not enough to attain survival and organizational success (Harvey-Jones, 1988; Kakabadse, 2001; Kotter, 1995). Vision should also reflect and be complemented by values (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), especially moral values (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Shamir et al., 1993), to give meaning and inspiration for people and to harness the collective effort of organizational members (Shamir et al., 1993) to enhance more positive organizational and social pursuits. Buddhist-enacted leaders show such visions by incorporating their understanding of Buddhist principles of impermanence, depending arising (Sanskrit: *Pratītyasamutpāda*; Pāli: *Paṭiccasamuppāda*) (*Lý duyên khởi*), and compassion to show their purpose in mission statements that are aimed at sustainability, compassion, and social responsibility.

The second contextual factor shaping leaders' behaviours and leadership styles is the *nature of their work and professions*. Buddhist leaders find that Buddhist principles are useful tools to help them tackle challenges in their work, such as the Middle Way (Sanskrit: *Madhyamāpratipad*; Pāli: *Majjhimāpaṭipadā*) (*Trung Đạo*), the Noble Eightfold Path (*Bát Chánh Đạo*), pāramitās (*Ba La Mật*), non-attachment (*không bám chấp*), compassion (*từ bi*), and the law of Karma (Sanskrit: *karman*; Pāli: *kamma*) (*nghiệp*). They make choices based on the Middle Way, and the 'middle' is locally (contextually) assessed (Niwano, 1980) in case-by-case analysis. It is a balanced approach, 'correcting any strong deviations to either the "left" or the "right" away from the "middle" course, locally interpreted in context' (Shen & Midgley, 2007, p. 172). In other words, Buddhist-enacted leaders demonstrate a dynamic middle-way approach (Combs et al., 2002).

The last contextual factor that stimulates leaders to form distinctive leadership characteristics and values is their *involvement in the spiritual movement*. To respond to rising spiritual needs and in response to their own spiritual practices, both Buddhist and spiritual leaders articulated their own value of altruistic love. Leaders show generosity through knowledge sharing by organizing workshops, professional coaching and training programmes, lovingkindness and compassion through non-coercive leadership, providing flexibility and autonomy for employees, and maintaining transparency and fairness. In promoting such values, leaders generate a positive, spiritual working environment that enhances knowledge-sharing behaviour (Rahman et al., 2015) and reduces organizational deviant behaviours (Chawla, 2014) and stress (Daniel, 2015). By providing a sense of calling that is meaningful (Fry, 2003); leaders can generate a sense of membership that creates connectedness and belonging in sharing, mutual obligation and commitment (Chawla & Guda, 2013) for social activities. Buddhist-enacted leaders particularly pay attention to helping employees to attain a wisdom-based state of mindfulness through various coaching activities in helping them with necessary knowledge and skills to eliminate their own suffering, both at the workplace and in life generally. By designing social activities such as wiser ball games, relevant topic-specific discussion sessions and meditation retreats, leaders assist employees to flourish and gain human strength and improve positive behaviours (Davis & Bjornberg, 2015; Hyland et al., 2015), gain self-understanding (Payutto, 2002), nurture social relationships (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017), and find work engaging (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2010).

Context in this study, following the critical-realist grounded-theory approach, appears as a strong causal mechanism in the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership. This contextual mechanism involves the ‘suffering’ from the institutional context of the one-party policy, the need for skillfulness in tackling increasing contemporary workplace challenges, and the response to a rising spiritual movement in the country. In the context of Vietnam this provides a rather dramatic story in explaining the enactment of Buddhism in leadership practice as a rising phenomenon in the country, which could not have been properly recognized solely through a mono-quantitative method in this study.

Examining the impact of the Vietnamese context on spiritual leadership in this research contributes to the currently sparse literature of empirical studies linking specific context to leadership behavior (Alazmi, 2016; Brown & Treviño; Toor & Ofori, 2009; Treviño et al., 2006). Leadership does not exist in vacuum but is embedded in its context and inseparable from context in the same way that a flavour is inseparable from food (Osborn et al., 2002). Leaders thereby demonstrate their appreciation of the context with context-specific reasoning (Westaby et al., 2010) in support of leadership-in-context (Alazmi, 2016; Vargo, 2009), as shown in the following leadership characteristics in the next section.

7.2.2 Buddhist-enacted leadership responses to context

This section unpacks the second layer of the wheel (Figure 7.1) and demonstrates how and what particular principles from the third layer are selected and applied in leadership practices in certain contexts.

7.2.2.1 A skilful means approach to tackle contextual challenges

Incorporating the five characteristics of Buddhist-enacted leadership to tackle contextual challenges in Vietnam requires a skilful means approach. In other words, as illustrated in the Buddhist-enacted leadership model, *Buddhist-enacted leadership is a process of self-transformation and operates as skilful means under multiple leadership identities to flexibly and mindfully respond to contextual challenges.*

Leaders who are Buddhist practitioners state that the practice of Buddhism must be engaged and incorporated in daily life. The challenges of the contemporary context are useful conditions for the practice of Buddhism. Suffering and trials are conditions that test one's capability to truly experience and apply Buddhist principles; therefore, context is a crucial part of Buddhist practice. Buddhism without contextual challenges is just an empty theoretical philosophy. Leaders found that their leadership is one of the many useful skilful means of practising Buddhism that can promote change, not only for the 'self' but also for other organizational members.

This study shows that contextual challenges boost leadership flexibility and adaptability in various ways, which is a vital, and practical interpretation and practice of Buddhism reflecting principles of impermanence (*vô thường*), non-attachment (*không bám chấp*), and non-self (Sanskrit: *anātman*; Pāli: *anattā*) (*vô ngã*) and qualities of pāramitās (*Ba La Mật*). Leadership flexibility and adaptability reflect the ability to accurately analyse and diagnose the situation and behave accordingly (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Buddhist-enacted leadership shares the same core competencies of situational leadership: diagnosis, flexibility, and partnering (Kaifi et al., 2014). In this sense, Buddhist-enacted leadership as skilful means resembles *situational leadership* as originally described by Hersey and Blanchard (1969). Situational leadership is a well-known model with a set of prescriptive principles (Blanchard, 2010) for an appropriate mix of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviours (Cubero, 2007; Graeff, 1997; Shin et al., 2011; Yukl, 2008; 2011; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Buddhist-enacted leadership, however, is different from situational leadership in the way it manifests itself as skilful means in complex and sensitive contexts. Situational leadership concerns behavioural and leadership adaptability (mostly with subordinates) in response to the inner context; however, no specific prescriptive approach is given to deal with sensitive outer contexts. The distinctive characteristics of the Vietnamese context are therefore favourable conditions for examining leadership skilfulness, flexibility and adaptability in enacting multiple leadership identities that attend to either collective working environment or to individual employees in the challenging outer contexts of Vietnam.

Buddhist-enacted leadership skilfulness in Vietnam accordingly is formed and challenged by *situational ethics*, with its numerous situational factors and ethical dilemmas and no clear moral right or wrong dominating a plausible decision (Robertson et al., 2002). Leaders are facing ethical dilemmas in having to consider ‘lobbying’ (*vận động hành lang*) and ‘bribery’ (*đút lót*) as part of the unavoidable ‘dark side’ (*mặt trái không tránh khỏi được*) culture of doing business in Vietnam. The 2016 corruption perceptions index ranked Vietnam 113 out of 176, scoring 33 out of 100 (Transparency International, 2017), reflecting problems in doing business within the nation with its policy instability, poor work ethic in the national labour force, corruption and inefficient government bureaucracy (Global Competitiveness Index, 2016–2017). The leaders in this study, to make decisions on business issues related to ‘lobbying’ and ‘bribery’, diagnose this

according to the Buddhist concept of the two levels of truth. In this case, ‘lobbying’ or ‘bribery’ can either be unacceptable or acceptable, based on the perception of the interpreter. The leaders suggested that, in the context of Vietnam, it is best to consider these sensitive issues under the umbrella of the ‘ultimate level’ of truth, at which all phenomena are empty (Snelling, 1999) and there are neither good nor bad choices. There is a gap between the formal rules governing the National Integrity System through the Vietnam’s anti-corruption law enacted in 2006 and the actual practices on the ground (Transparency International, 2017).

Buddhist-enacted leaders in this study show systematic thinking through the principle of cause-effect and compassion. Furthermore, they are also mindful, accepting the necessary but minimum ‘bribery’ and ‘lobbying’ costs needed in exchange for transactional benefits to save time and stay timely and competitive, for example in introducing needed medical products or services in response to patients’ need. They are skilful in staying away from other costs, gaining legitimate and competitive advantage not by engaging in further ‘bribery’ or ‘lobbying’ activities but by gaining publicity and reputation by their quality-oriented products and services. Leaders build company image by organizing educational workshops nationally and various charitable activities, providing products and services free of charge in poor, remote and mountainous provinces where there is limited access to information and to good products and services. This indicates skilfulness and the ability to ‘let go’ of extreme interpretations to attain contextually relevant and appropriate choices.

It is apparent that context is a significant influence in Buddhist-enacted leadership. Based on the critical-realist analysis approach, context here has a paradoxical role in manifesting Buddhist-enacted leadership. It has a stimulating role in encouraging the incorporation of Buddhist principles in leadership but it also has a provocative role in challenging and testing Buddhist-enacted leadership in the contemporary context. Therefore, context has a substantial role in explaining the processual manifestation of Buddhist-enacted leadership. The application of Buddhist principles therefore needs to be addressed in relation to context-specific and context-sensitive approaches.

Applying appropriate Buddhist principles from the second layer of the wheel as skilful means therefore, provides leaders with the following capabilities:

- (1) Understanding cognitive complexity and causal relationships through the principle of causal effect;
- (2) Enhancing social intelligence and skilful responses to the changing and complex context of Vietnam through mindfulness practices;
- (3) Enhancing emotional intelligence to understand and motivate employees through the combination of wisdom and compassion.

These traits, values and skills illustrate the skilfulness of Buddhist-enacted leaders in dealing with inner contexts, especially in maintaining effective leader-follower relationships.

The Buddhist principles applied in leadership respond well both to Yukl and Mahsud's (2010) call for more research examining leadership flexibility and adaptability and to DeRue and Wellman's (2009) call for a new focus on the development of adaptive leadership capacity. In responding to the unique context of Vietnam, Buddhist-enacted leaders demonstrate a skilful approach to situational ethics associated with choices a leader has to make to stay both competitive and ethical. Spiritual leaders who are non-Buddhist in this study showed unclear approaches to these issues: there were significantly fewer spiritual leader participants than Buddhist practitioner leaders. Enacting leadership as skilful means in Buddhist practice therefore has a lot to offer in developing the theory of situational leadership in response to outer contexts and issues relating to situational ethics.

7.2.2.2 From individual to organizational mindfulness – a departure from Western interpretations of corporate mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness (*chánh niệm*) (Pāli: *sati*; Sanskrit: *smṛti*), according to the findings, plays a dynamic supporting means for Buddhist-enacted leadership practices. In response to the complex context, leaders demonstrate a variety of mindful states and practices through the application of Buddhist principles and through various meditation techniques. Mindfulness is attained through various states, not necessarily from meditation only (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Having experienced the process and hard work associated with attaining the state of mindfulness, they consider mindfulness practices as a contextual means subject to change when needed.

Buddhist-enacted leaders highlighted two main concerns, which represent a departure from Western interpretations of mindfulness practices: (1) mindfulness is a wisdom-based individual practice based on individual choice; and (2) corporate mindfulness is a collective form of individual mindfulness practices which is non-existent without proper implementation based on contextual customisation.

In elaborating the dynamic nature of choices related to mindfulness practices, almost every leader participating in this study indicated a different way of attaining mindfulness. For example, various forms of meditation and breathing techniques were identified, such as Hara breathing (*thở đan điền*), Kundalini-Chakra meditation (*thở luân xa*), Mantra (*niệm*), Samatha (*thiền chỉ*), Vipassana (*thiền minh sát*), and Satipatthana (*thiền quán*). Leaders chose the meditation techniques that they found suitable for their physical, internal and external conditions. However, respondents also demonstrated that these techniques are not sufficient and are just formulations (*hình thức*) of mindfulness to enhance physical strength and psychological stability or calmness in the ‘moment’ of practising, because these choices are contextual and subject to change by different practitioners and contexts.

To attain a real mindfulness state, practitioners need to accumulate wisdom (*hiếu biết*), based on life experiences and capability, to continuously apply Buddhist principles such as the Middle Way, impermanence and causal effect in daily life and organizational contexts. Their interpretations of mindfulness reject the Western reductionist views of mindfulness as ‘moment awareness’ and stress-reduction techniques (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 2003) and they re-emphasise the wisdom and values gained from personal experience (Bodhi, 2011; Gethin, 2011; Purser & Milillo, 2015) and Buddhist traditions (Dreyfus, 2011; Dunne, 2011).

According to Purser and Milillo (2015), there are two common-ground purposes of Buddhist mindfulness practices: *psycho-spiritual development* – concerning the goal of eliminating root causes of suffering through salvation – and *in-depth meditative training* – to attain cognitive and emotional transformation in behavioural and psychological traits by correcting ‘suffering defects’ in the mental states of those who have not been trained (Lutz et al., 2007, p. 503). Therefore, wisdom is important in promoting intellectual understanding of one’s surroundings to

moderate desires, transforming the ‘self’ and reducing the state of suffering resulting from attachment to such desires. As no individual experiences the same suffering as another and has similar physical or psychological conditions, the choice of meditative training should be made by the individual subject to personal conditions and external suitability.

Articulating wisdom, according to leader participants in this study, is an ongoing process that involves lessons from success and failure, the recollection of experiences of actual engagement in the state of mindfulness, and the abandonment of thoughts that may lead to suffering (Anālayo, 2010, Bodhi, 2011; Gethin, 2001; Purser & Milillo, 2015; Thānissaro, 2012; Wallace & Bodhi, 2006). This process is further elaborated by Gethin (2001) as follow: ‘(i) *sati* remembers or does not lose what is before the mind; (ii) *sati* is, as it were, a natural presence of mind; it stands near and hence serves to guard the mind; (iii) *sati* calls to mind, that is, it remembers things in relationship to the above and thus tends to know their value and to widen the view; (iv) *sati* is thus closely related to wisdom; it naturally tends to see things as they truly are’ (p. 44). Buddhist mindfulness, as reaffirmed by the leader participants, is based on wisdom to attain genuine reality through the lens of the ‘ultimate truth’ that ‘neither suppresses the contents of experience nor compulsively reacts to them’ (Anālayo, 2010, p. 267).

The foregoing perceptions of Buddhist mindfulness suggest a major departure in how Buddhist-enacted leaders in Vietnam, compared to Western leaders, perceive corporate mindfulness and introduce mindfulness practices into organizations. These findings support the view of Vu and Gill (2017) that, as an individual practice, it is wrong to see mindfulness as an ‘umbrella’ term, a ‘one-size-fits-all band aid’ to adopt in organizations comprising different members with dynamic and different characteristics and conditions. In the West, the commercialisation and commodification of organizational mindfulness has resulted in a ‘quick fix’, a universal cure for all types of contemporary problems (Hyland, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013) and, yet again, is a potential manifestation of institutionalised greed, according to Purser and Loy (2013). It has become a ‘lucrative cottage industry’ (Purser & Loy, 2013) – a stress reduction technique (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) to be sold to enhance organizational productivity, profit and consumer materialism (Eaton, 2014; Hyland, 2015; Purser, 2014; Stone, 2013). It is also an instrument to pacify employees’ exposure to a corporate stressful or toxic life caused by organizations

themselves, a ‘refashioned’ sophisticated method of deploying a ‘cow psychology’ within organizations whereby cows are made to produce more milk (Purser & Loy, 2013). Western mindfulness approaches show no resemblance to the ‘right mindfulness’ that is based on compassion and wisdom originating from the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path (Purser, 2014; Purser & Loy, 2013).

In sharing their experiences in introducing mindfulness practices to employees, the leader participants indicated a number of ways to incorporate the concept of ‘mindfulness’ in organizations properly in a way that does not misinterpret or commercialise Buddhist ‘right mindfulness’ as a means for pursuing organizational ‘ends’. The first important thing to keep in mind in promoting genuine corporate mindfulness practices is not to impose or generalise it. In practice, mindfulness should be customised and personalised according to personal and contextual choices. Second, respondents emphasised the importance of wisdom in attaining the state of mindfulness not just through meditation but also through the opportunities to be exposed to work–life experiences and even to challenges, and they encouraged mindfulness through wisdom development activities. Through these dynamic activities, employees benefit personally and professionally, while leaders create healthy and effective organizational environments with psychologically, physically and intellectually strong employees. As such, leaders promote a less instrumental and a more compassionate approach to corporate mindfulness for the sake of both employee and organizational well-being: there is no form of effective moral leadership that coerces people to compromise or change their deeply-held personal values and beliefs (Gill, 2011, p. 170). This suggests a departure from Western approaches to mindfulness whereby mindfulness practices are often ‘instrumentalised’ and generalised without taking into consideration their suitability and the different needs of employees.

In summary, the examination of mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective in general provides an important contribution to the literature on corporate mindfulness and for the examination of Fry’s spiritual leadership model in particular. First, it has clarified the weakness in Western interpretations of corporate mindfulness in confusing individual and organizational levels in interpreting and conducting research as well as the resulting the co-optation of mindfulness practices, which may not be appreciated by employees themselves. Second, the wisdom-based

and ethics-based nature of mindfulness practices originating from the Noble Eightfold Path is reduced to moment-awareness techniques in many studies of corporate mindfulness. As a result, other alternative mindfulness practices are ignored, as is highlighted by how Buddhist-enacted leaders practise and introduce mindfulness in organizations in many different ways – not just meditation.

Lastly, the findings of this study shed light on why ‘inner life’ appeared to be a weak predictor in testing Fry’s spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam even though mindfulness practices are crucial parts of Buddhist practice. Fry’s inner life is characterized by moment-awareness only, which does not seem to be applicable in the context under study because many respondents were from organizations which embraced wisdom-based mindfulness practices rather than merely moment-awareness ones. On the other hand, the findings revealed some resistance and concerns from employees when mindfulness is practised at the organizational level as opposed to an individual level of practice. Therefore, this outcome suggests a revisiting of Fry’s spiritual leadership model, especially in relation to ‘inner life’ and its measurement, and at the same time a questioning of the generalizability and universality of the model without examining the role of context in the spiritual enactment of leadership.

7.2.2.3 Leadership adaptability through multiple leadership identities

Leadership is a contextual phenomenon (Bligh, 2016), and it is dependent upon contextual factors rather than universality (Osborn et al., 2002). Context has stimulated opportunities for personal development for leaders and crafted challenges to test the actual application of Buddhist principles in fostering the mastery of skilful means in leadership practices. The findings show that, to respond to the complex nature of the Vietnamese context, Buddhist-enacted leaders apply the concepts of non-attachment (*không bám chấp*), emptiness (*tánh không*) and compassion (*từ bi*) in forming multiple identities in response to the challenging context of Vietnam in general and to the skepticism of employees in particular.

Multiple leadership identities here refer to two main things: (1) the leader’s ability to let go of the ‘self’ and ‘ego’ for self-transformational purposes and (2) the ability to respond flexibly to

different followers and to the different contexts of followers. Buddhist-enacted leaders have experienced their journey of self-reflection and self-transformation in truth-seeking as involving self-sacrifice and learning from mistakes. For instance, learning to tackle situational ethics like bribery requires a skilful 'identity' to differentiate between various costs associated with decisions and between choices that can be compromised and choices that need to be eliminated. Likewise, with different personalities and contexts of employees, leaders cannot always show a compassionate 'identity'. Too much compassion can be abused, and any form of extreme attachment in Buddhism is considered to reflect ignorance. Compassion may be useful to promote harmony within the organization and to provide opportunities for individuals to improve. However, compassion can be counterproductive in cases where employees show continuous or repetitive negative intentions and attitudes. A 'harder' side of leadership can be more effective in such cases. The combination of wisdom and compassion is strongly emphasised by respondents.

The downside of multiple leadership identities, however, is that they raise concerns about the authenticity of leadership practices. The fact that employees consider that compassion is generally practised in the expectation of reciprocity means that a compassionate identity may be questionable. On the one hand this assumption is based on with employees' skeptical perceptions and on the other hand it draws attention to contextual sensitivity to cultural norms. For example, the findings show that using monetary means to assist employees in Vietnam creates a feeling of unrest and indebtedness and, psychologically, employees feel more responsible and cautious in their actions, including being critical of, or having disagreements with, the debts they owe. As this kind of psychological feeling is deeply embedded in the psyche of the Vietnamese people, leaders need to be more skilful in the means and the appropriate 'identity' they choose to promote their compassion. Leadership identity is 'empty' in nature, subject to the impermanent nature of the context. It surely takes time to make mistakes and learn from them and improve for leaders to master the complexity of context.

The paradoxical mechanism role of context is clearly demonstrated in the process of identity construction of Buddhist-enacted leadership. The need for leadership flexibility and skillfulness to respond to institutional and social issues in the business context of Vietnam has fostered

multiple-identity construction as skillful means enabling leadership adaptability to contextual constraints. On the other hand, such flexibility questions leadership authenticity and consistency in decision-making. However, such a paradox highlights the distinctiveness of identity-construction from a Buddhist perspective.

While a number of studies of identity construction claim that identity has become an instrument for leaders to customize their personas to gain more influence and meet the expectations of stakeholders including followers (Shamir et al., 1993; Sinclair, 2011), the findings of this study suggest that multiple-identity construction in Buddhist-enacted leadership is shaped out of compassion and skillfulness in response to the external context. Multiple-identity construction for Buddhist-enacted leaders is also a form of their continuous practice in applying the concepts of non-self and emptiness in their leadership. Apparently, multiple-identity construction from a Buddhist perspective is compatible with the claim of Evans and Sinclair (2016) that leadership identities are often in negotiation with external pressures and public legitimacy.

In summary, it is evident from the findings that it is far more difficult to apply Buddhist principles in practice than simply to understand their textual meanings. The mastery of Buddhist application either in daily life or in leadership takes time, continuous effort, and most importantly making mistakes and learning from lessons. Some respondents expressed that, after twenty years of practice, they still had not been able to practise ‘emptiness’, non-self or non-attachment properly. Observations also show that some leaders find it harder to control their anger than others do and to stay non-attached in unexpected or unwanted situations, which proves the differences in maturity levels in individual transformational journeys.

The choice of appropriate skilful means is based on context, leadership identity and mindful leadership in tackling contextual challenges. Therefore, skilful means is ‘empty’ in nature. It changes accordingly as leaders change their identities to respond to complex and compelling contexts. However, the inconsistencies in soft/hard or flexible/rigid leadership styles in responding to different contexts may create impressions of inauthentic leadership practices. Therefore, Buddhist-enacted leadership is a contextually formed leadership practice and, paradoxically, it is through context that it is both formed and authentically challenged.

7.2.3 The formation of leadership characteristics through selective and skilful application of Buddhist principles

This section explores Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics incorporating applicable Buddhist principles in the third layer of the wheel (Figure 5.1) to form leadership characteristics in the fourth layer in relation to context.

7.2.3.1 Flexibility

‘One-size does not necessarily fit all’ is what Buddhist-enacted leaders feel about their leadership. Findings in this study suggest that leaders express high levels of flexibility at both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels.

At the ***intrapersonal level***, the way in which Buddhist leaders perceive the ‘self’ departs from Western conceptualisations. For Buddhist-enacted leaders, possessing a ‘self’ or an ‘ego’ is a fundamental cause of suffering and failure in practising leadership. By not being attached to ‘ego’ or a particular identity, leaders are free to express multiple identities flexibly as they fit in different situations. Western concepts of the ‘self’, on the other hand, consider self-esteem as a universal human value (Roland, 1988) and place importance on the uniqueness, purpose and volition of the individualistic self (Sampson, 1988). By being flexible in identity formation based on employees’ development needs, leaders minimise over-identification (Avanzi et al., 2012; Dukerich et al, 1998) based on misinterpretation of the self and strong attachment to individual perceptions of what the self perceives to be right. Flexibly enacting multiple identities subject to the principles of non-attachment and compassion also diminishes identity obsession (Foucault, 1972), fantasies in leadership (Sveningsson & Larson, 2006), defensive mechanisms (Brown, 1997), grandiosity (Maccoby, 2000), narcissism (Steyrer, 2002), ego-centric ideal portrayal (Schwarz, 1990), and seduction (Carr, 1998). All of these characteristics in well-known leaders are familiar to us.

At the ***interpersonal level***, Buddhist-enacted leaders show flexibility in creating a supportive working environment and freedom at work through delegation and empowerment because it is

neither feasible nor realistic for leaders ‘to have all the answers’ and ‘make all the decision’ (Lovelace et al., 2007, p. 375). They selectively delegate tasks based on individual employee characteristics and the relevant context, and they demonstrate flexibility in participative leadership, listening, and responding to employees’ opinions and suggestions. Flexibility was also evident in how leaders respond to industrial changes to grasp newly emerging opportunities. Buddhist-enacted leaders showed empowering leadership: delegating authority to employees, promoting self-directed autonomous and collective decision-making, information sharing, teamwork coaching and requests for subordinates’ input (Arnold et al., 2000; Burke et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2007, 2011; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Yun et al., 2006). In delegation, transferring meaningful responsibilities and providing decision-making power to employees positively affect employee performance and satisfaction (Chen & Aryee, 2007; Schriesheim et al., 1998) and increase leaders’ likability and favourable impressions among employees (Ansari et al., 2009; House, 1971) as well as leadership effectiveness (Kim & Yukl, 1995; Johnson et al., 2008; Martell & DeSmet, 2001). Buddhist-enacted leaders also displayed participative leadership (Chen & Tjosvold, 2006; de Poel et al., 2014), involving employees in decision making to increase the latter’s influence.

The majority of employees found leadership flexibility helpful, especially in creating opportunities for learning (Yun et al., 2005), knowledge creation (Menguc et al., 2013) and shared leadership (Hoch, 2013) through empowerment. However, some still had reservations about leaders’ skilfulness in their application. While there were rigidities in how leaders maintained organizational procedures that should have otherwise been updated, sometimes there was felt to be too much flexibility, which confused employees because of perceived inconsistency of leadership styles. These comments reflect how not all followers are receptive to empowering initiatives and how empowering leadership is not beneficial in all organizational contexts as a universally accepted practice (Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001; Lorinkova et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2013; Yagil, 2002; Yun et al., 2006). In this research, there are signs of coordination problems between leaders and followers and that leaders may tip too much toward inclusion of followers, thus becoming less effective or assertive in their understanding of followers (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2003; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Such negative impacts from flexibility in empowering leadership indicate how leaders need more skilfulness

and continuous improvement in their leadership practices based on wisdom to tackle contextual challenges due to unforeseeable and uncontrollable outcomes. These findings contribute to Sharma and Kirkman's (2015) call for studies exploring less positive, unintended and negative aspects that are likely to occur from empowering leadership.

7.2.3.2 Compassion

Buddhist-enacted leaders place great importance on compassionate leadership. In their opinion compassion must be incorporated with wisdom as 'two wings of the bird'. In the opinion of respondents, compassion alone sometimes can reflect ignorance. Within the workplace, such an approach may cultivate counterproductive effects such as a lack of assertiveness and warning measures that lead to the recurrence of unethical behaviours out of compassion in such cases as stealing and dishonesty. Without tough measures taken in some certain contexts, negative collective action or other unexpected consequences of impermanence may take place as a result of loose leadership or managerial control.

In Buddhism, compassion is claimed to offer benefits not only to the receiver but also to the giver in attaining inner well-being and enlightenment (Goldstein, 1976; Narada, 2006). However, compassion alone can be detrimental, generating sentimentality and unfairness and failing to assure positive outcomes for both givers and receivers (Simpson, 2014). Compassion alone, as suggested in the findings of this study, can discourage individual effort (Kant, 1996; Nietzsche, 2002; Plato, 1992; Spinoza, 1996), expand suffering by contagion (Kant 1996; Nietzsche, 1999), encourage favouritism and partisanship (Thompson, 1975), and conflict with justice and fairness (Batson et al., 1995; Thompson, 1975).

Buddhist-enacted leaders therefore pay great attention in analysing the context to decide on the level of compassion that should be given to employees and even whether to be compassionate in some certain situations. Wisdom here refers to the ability to stay mindful and be honest in the given context without being trapped into attachment to one's own pre-formed perceptions and to be psychologically flexible (Atkins & Parker, 2012; Dutton et al., 2014). Wisdom in Buddhist-enacted leadership reflects a combination of rational, analytical, intellectual and logical

capabilities with the ability to develop non-attachment capabilities and the ability to change perceptions (Hoyt, 2014).

Leaders emphasised wise interpretation based on the actual context without being manipulated by their own perceptions. Buddhist-enacted leaders explain that, for some particular employees, especially employees with low levels of self-efficacy, employees need to be pushed or to experience difficult situations to realise their potential following a learning curve and as personal development rather than simply showing compassion to reduce their suffering. In this case, leaders have critically identified and analysed the contextual factors based on wisdom, namely the focal actors of the situation, the personal context of the employee, the relational context of leader–follower relationships, and the organizational context concerning shared values, beliefs, norms and practices (Dutton et al., 2014).

Buddhist-enacted leaders showed psychological flexibility (Atkins & Parker, 2012; Dutton et al., 2014) in reducing defensiveness and showing the courage to act differently (Kanov et al., 2017) to arrive at appropriate and effective leadership responses to compassion. Suffering does not always trigger compassion, and compassionate actions do not always follow from suffering (Frost et al., 2000; Lilius et al., 2008) but from wise interpretation of the context and players involved in it.

In response to leadership compassion, most employees expressed their gratitude for compassionate acts. However, they also showed concern about their sense of indebtedness and reciprocity as a result of compassionate leadership. Because the Vietnamese culture prioritises respect over seniority and superiority, employees sometimes felt pressure in being the receivers. They expressed fear over refusing to accept help from leaders, which is similar to what Simpson and colleagues (2014, p. 355) identify as negative impacts of employee refusal that might be seen as ‘contempt as ungrateful, isolates or not team players’. Compassion not only represents personal power and courage in expressing it and in resisting moral distress and a sense of sentimental hopelessness and being overwhelmed (Aristotle, 2006; Halifax, 2011, Simpson, 2014), physical exhaustion (Hochschild, 1983) or emotional distress as handling toxicity (Frost, 2003) and in identifying and easing others’ suffering. It can also be a sign of weakness (Simpson,

2014). Acts of compassion by the giver may highlight receivers' vulnerabilities (Clark, 1997). This may create a sense of dependency, indebtedness or emotional enslavement of the receiver in relation to the giver (Stirrat & Henkel, 1997; Szasz, 1998).

Compassion without wisdom is sentimentalism; wisdom without compassion leads to arrogance; and power without compassion and wisdom can be exploitative, self-serving and destructive (Simpson, 2014). In leadership roles, maintaining the balance of all three without cultivating each one in isolation is crucial because leaders have the formal power and status to shape contextual factors to either facilitate or hold back compassion (Dutton et al., 2014).

This study highlights the complex nature of organizational life that challenges compassionate leadership in practice. Although Buddhist-enacted leaders pay more attention to the context and principles of non-self in the interpretation of compassion, employees' responses stress the importance for leaders to be wiser in expressing compassion to avoid institutionalised and co-opted compassion as a form of selective attention and non-attention that are embedded in compassion processes. As Buddhist-enacted leaders have pointed this out, it can be argued that more needs to be done in practice to balance compassion, wisdom, and power, taking into consideration the contemporary context of Vietnam that is beset by skepticism. In manifesting leadership practices that combine compassion and wisdom, Buddhist-enacted leaders show reflexivity and critical reasoning in their leadership decisions. As in studies in Bhutan, neither compassion, wisdom, nor power alone can be sufficient in the absence of the other two (Simpson, 2014; Ura, 2004).

7.2.3.3 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence appears to be another characteristic that emerged from the leaders' application of Buddhist principles in their leadership practices. They provide evidence of emotional intelligence at the intrapersonal level by showing understanding of the universe and the 'self' through the Four Noble Truths (Sanskrit: *catvāri āryasatyāni*; Pāli: *cattāri ariyasaccāni*) (*Tứ Diệu Đế*) and the principles of impermanence, cause-effect and depending arising. They showed awareness of the principle of non-self in Buddhism and that attachment to

egocentric emotions is a form of suffering. As such, Buddhist-enacted leaders at the intrapersonal level show flexibility in adjusting personal expectations in response to the context to avoid disappointments, especially when dealing with issues relating to situational ethics, like bribery, lobbying or difficult customers. At the interpersonal level, the leaders felt that bringing Buddhism into their life and leadership practices enhanced their ability to stay calm and improve their relationships with followers. It also facilitated their willingness to adapt to unexpected situations and to manage their emotions in response to challenging employees and contexts.

In general, Buddhist-enacted leaders experience less stress and more peacefulness in decision-making, showing optimism and positivism through their life and leadership vision and purpose because of their appreciation of the principles of impermanence and depending arising. Buddhist-enacted leaders in this study illustrate Bar-On's (1997, 2006) five components of emotional intelligence: (1) *intrapersonal* (self-regard, emotional self-awareness, self-actualisation); (2) *interpersonal* (empathy, interpersonal relationship, social responsibility); (3) *adaptability* (flexibility, reality testing, problem-solving), (4) *stress-management* (stress tolerance, impulse control); and (4) *general mood* (optimism and happiness). This study also illustrates that fact that emotional intelligence is crucial for leaders (Goleman, 1995) because leadership itself is an 'emotion laden process' (George, 2000, p. 1046), an emotion-inducing phenomenon (Li et al, 2016), whereby leaders evokes emotions in followers (Humphrey, 2002) in a way that it cultivates leadership effectiveness (Gardner & Strough, 2003; Kerr et al., 2006; Lopes et al., 2006; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005; Wolff et al., 2002), follower satisfaction and extra-role behaviour (Wong & Law, 2002).

Despite the fact that Buddhist-enacted leaders show more significant emotional intelligence compared to non-Buddhist leaders, they are not without shortcomings. Employees indicated that they did not sense any manipulative emotional intelligence from leaders – only their lack of skilfulness on occasion. Observations by the researcher also highlighted inconsistencies in leaders' expression of their emotional intelligence, suggesting different levels of maturity in manifesting emotional intelligence associated with leaders' self-transformation during Buddhist practice that is based on personal experience and contextual differences. These findings support the view that people vary in their level of control according to their emotional intelligence

(Kilduff et al., 2010) and that, in some cases, emotional intelligence and affective processes in organizations occur at a subconscious level and implicitly (Barsade et al., 2009). Findings also suggest that leaders might have been more effective by expressing their emotional intelligence more strategically by displaying emotions that are appropriate and conducive to the right employee and in the right context (Kilduff et al., 2010). Strategically imposed emotional intelligence nevertheless can be counterproductive if leaders manage their feelings negatively to manipulate, control and benefit themselves and exploit others in non-pro-social ways (De Raad, 2005; Mayer, 2001). In this way, the application of wisdom, compassion and the Middle Way to avoid extremeness is crucial.

7.2.3.4 Managing desires

The ability to manage desires is another characteristic that emerged from the application of Buddhist principles in leadership practices. Yet, in this study, this particular characteristic was controversial and elicited different opinions from employees. Desires in Buddhism directly link to attachment and potentially to suffering, which leaders try to manage and minimise to avoid extremism skilfully through the Middle Way. For Buddhist-enacted leaders, managing desires is mainly about managing temptations in their leadership roles, releasing rigid attachments to expectations and creating leadership visions that serve the common good.

Employees showed appreciation of how leaders were willing to compromise their personal time and interests for the benefit of employees by helping them to complete tasks and even offering financial assistance when they needed it. Interestingly, the findings suggest that the way leaders managed their desires sometimes was misplaced, having led to problematic concerns for followers. Bennis (1989) claimed that leaders must first know themselves so that they do not 'lose' themselves. In this study, results indicated that having self-awareness is not enough. Knowing the context and those involved in the context is equally crucial for leadership effectiveness. Employees in this study occasionally questioned leaders' genuine generous intentions. Furthermore, employees were less satisfied with their compensation and benefit schemes initiated by their leaders. For many of them, managing desires meant that leaders were willing to compromise their own desires for financial gain in order to enhance employees' well-

being and need satisfaction. There are two possible explanations for employees' reactions. Firstly, psychological instability due to the lack of trust of the Vietnamese people has adversely affected employees' levels of skepticism towards leadership practices. Secondly, leaders have not been skilful enough to show their genuine intentions by managing their desires for the common good to employees, or perhaps some desires were easier to manage than others.

Ability to manage desires is an essential characteristic of a good leader (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). However, the genuine act of managing desires needs to be carried out skilfully by leaders, acknowledging the complex context involved (including their physical, psychological and financial needs) in their decisions, and, most importantly, doing it out of genuine compassion and not just as a way to seek attention from organizational members. As Vietnamese employees may be skeptical about many things, including how leaders manifest their control over their personal and professional desires for sustainability, leaders need to continually prove their genuine intentions consistently in the long-term.

7.2.3.5 Social orientations

Buddhist principles nurture strong social orientations. Buddhist-enacted leaders demonstrate various initiatives in promoting employee psychological and physical well-being and show sustainable business development strategies based on the law of Karma and the combination of compassion and wisdom. The law of Karma explains causal effects and depending arising in both human and non-human beings, creating a symbiotic relationship between all beings in promoting sustainability (James, 2004). Likewise, compassion promotes empathy through deeds, thoughts, words, lovingkindness and non-violence within oneself and towards others to enhance cooperation and mutual respect at organizational and societal levels (Abeydeera et al., 2016; Prayukvong & Rees, 2010).

Buddhist-enacted leaders consider corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, for example, as the macro-level of compassion through which organizations respond to social issues. This involves discretionary corporate acts aimed at positive social change and social welfare beyond the egoistic and narrow economic or legal interests of the organizations (Aguilera et al., 2007;

McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Moon et al., 2014). However, in making corporate decisions based on a combination of compassion and wisdom, Buddhist-enacted leaders show a pragmatic approach to CSR and sustainability. They are aware that, in the context of Vietnam, where many aspects of society are still underdeveloped, financial sustainability is the basis for promoting other types of sustainability. Without being financially stable enough to survive in the competitive business environment and provide sustainable incomes for employees, all other investments to promote other types of sustainability remain a luxury.

Findings from this study suggest that CSR and sustainability practices are highly valued by employees, and organizations show considerable social contributions in integrating professional, educational, psychological and physical social events not only for employees but also for the general public. Yet employees' satisfaction at the organizational level was only moderate. Besides the fact that employees develop a sense of self-worth through socially responsible organizations with a positive image through CSR activities (Peterson, 2004; Riordan et al., 1997) and enhance intrinsic motivation, attitudinal and increased pro-social behaviors based on positive perceptions of organizations' CSR activities (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010; Rupp et al., 2006), employees still expect more from leaders and organizations in terms of compensation and benefits to meet their financial needs.

Furthermore, employees manifest different expectations in different industries. This might reflect that fact that leaders are better in promoting compassion at the macro level compared to how they initiate and encourage a compassionate environment within their organizations. On the other hand, being skilfully compassionate based on wisdom may not be consistent with employees' desires – or employees' immoderate desires may contribute to their dissatisfaction at work. In comparing this study's findings with Moon and colleagues' (2014) suggestions on what makes a compassionate environment in organizations, Buddhist-enacted leaders have been able to fulfill two out of three aspects. The leaders use both role-modeling behaviours in trusting and being compassionate to employees and CSR initiatives to improve the community and society. However, they have not been able to meet employees' expectations in having a perceived fair distribution of compensation and benefits. This reaction reaffirms why the leaders emphasise

having financial sustainability and responsibility first from which to implement other types of responsibilities within their CSR.

Unlike most leaders in Vietnamese organizations that follow mimetic isomorphism²¹, imitating peer organizations, mostly foreign ones and the ones that seem to be more successful and pursuing CSR practices, Buddhist-enacted leaders implement CSR practices based on their application of Buddhist principles, likely because of the lack of guidelines on CSR in Vietnam (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). It is evident that their efforts have been recognised by employees, yet there are also limitations and challenges in their application within the complex context of Vietnam. Situational context is a crucial factor that can either strengthen or constrain cognitive reflection and behavioural action (Bandura, 1991). Issues like bribery and skepticism in Vietnam are clearly challenges, but at the same time these can strengthen leaders' skilfulness in responding to contextual obstacles. For instance, leaders may make sense of transactional bribery in certain contexts to save time and introduce needed services and products in a timely manner to meet customers' needs in particular and social demands at large. Leadership skilfulness in promoting both social and organizational well-being could clearly benefit more from further longitudinal studies in Vietnam, and perhaps elsewhere.

In summary, the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics through the choice and application of Buddhist principles is a processual phenomenon in response to the distinctive context of Vietnam. This process involves the individual transformation of leaders in a reflexive manner to various contextual constraints. Based on the contextual approaches of Buddhist-enacted leadership identified in the previous section, such as a skillful means approach, a mindful approach or a multiple-identity approach, these approaches require a process of individual transformation and adaptation. This process involves the let-go of the 'self' in relation to several Buddhist concepts: non-self and emptiness, flexibility and non-attachment in the application of the concept of 'impermanence', empathy and tolerance based on compassion, respect from 'depending arising', skilfulness from the concept of skillful means, a long-term

²¹ Organizational copying or mimicking behaviours in response to uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

perspective from the quality of patience, and moderation of pursuits from the concept of Middle Way and the Four Noble Truths.

During the transformation process, leaders form their distinctive characteristics, namely leadership flexibility, compassion, emotional intelligence, ability to manage desires, and social orientation. The effectiveness of these characteristics is dependent on leaders' maturity level in their practice of Buddhist over the years, their experiences in life and as leaders, and contextual factors. These aspects form a relational experience in enacting Buddhist practices, in which the role of context remains paradoxical in shaping characteristics of Buddhist-enacted leaders. On the one hand, the challenging external factors enable personal development in enhancing emotional intelligence, self-transformation and pragmatism through Buddhist practices in leadership to tackle ethical dilemmas and attend to social demands and concerns practically and skillfully. On the other hand, contextual constraints, especially the lack of trust within the Vietnamese society, challenge leaders' authenticity, their ability to manage desires, and social orientation against existing materialist thinking in the transitional context. The influence of context in this study shows its crucial role in the following section examining the effectiveness of Buddhist-enacted leadership in Vietnam.

7.3 Outcomes of Buddhist-enacted leadership in the context of Vietnam

Findings in this study suggest that applying Buddhist principles in leadership practices has causal relationships with organizational outcomes. There are obvious advantages in bringing Buddhism into spiritual leadership practice. However, there are also challenges associated with this in the context of Vietnam. Context, highlighted as playing a salient role in this study, paradoxically serves as both a favourable condition and an obstacle for Buddhist-enacted leadership. This section now examines the effectiveness and outcomes of Buddhist-enacted leadership practices. The examination of Buddhist-enacted leadership from both leaders' and employees' perspectives in this section also responds to the limitations of the preliminary quantitative phase of this study. It also highlights the solid role of context as a mechanism impacting on the outcome of Buddhist-enacted leadership.

7.3.1 The impact of context on leadership outcomes and employee responses

Buddhist-enacted leaders in this study enhance a sense of membership and calling in organizations, introducing wisdom-based mindfulness practices within workplaces while respecting employees' freedom of choice. While most of their spiritual organizational practices have been well received by employees, employees also demonstrated skepticism about their leaders' real intentions behind those initiatives. Some employees felt that introducing a variety of mindfulness or spiritual practices is just a way of creating distraction for employees or it is another unofficial way of compensating for the hardship organizations create for employees. There were employees who claimed these practices to be a 'soft' instrument (*công cụ mềm*) to win over stubborn or hard-headed (*cứng đầu*) employees. These employees believed that being engaged in such activities may create obsessions resulting in the formation of attitudes of 'agreeableness' (*thiếu chính kiến*) among employees instead of following their own initiatives or proactive work behaviour. This finding is similar to what Wu and Parker (2017) found on how attachment anxiety affects proactive work behavior. Furthermore, as Buddhist practitioners some employees consider spirituality, especially Buddhism, as a personal practice. They felt that practising Buddhism requires personal effort and that different individuals follow and apply different practices. In Buddhist thinking and practice, nobody's experience is the same as others.

According to a number of employees, attending mindfulness and spirituality sessions may create disruption rather than self-improvement. These perceptions reflect the damaged belief systems of employees in particular and the Vietnamese people in general that were discussed earlier. People have become skeptical about everything in life: in the products that they purchase and even in their relationships. They have become more cautious in life and at their workplaces. Especially when spirituality and religion in the nation are misguided, some employees find it extremely difficult to believe in spirituality. Attribution theory (Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1972; Nisbett & Ross, 1980) highlights the underlying assumptions of such skepticism: individuals tend to evaluate the motives behind actions that affect their attitudes and behaviours. Forehand and Grier (2003) claim that individuals find that there are motives that potentially benefit individuals or benefit the firm itself. These motives reflect altruistic attitudes rather than egoistic ones (Bendapudi et al., 1996), exogenous rather than endogenous ones (Kruglanski, 1975), and other-centered versus self-centered attitudes (Ellen et al., 2000). Employees are careful in adapting to

newly introduced practices because of concern about any possible hidden (or overt) instrumentality associated with such practices.

The findings support the view that some employees share the same concerns as academics have in using spirituality, and Buddhism in particular, as a religious language for commercial gain (Bass, 2008), for the sole or main purpose of profit-making (Case & Gosling, 2010; Casey, 2002; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009), and as an instrument for skilful manipulation (English et al., 2005; Krishnakumar et al., 2015). Programmatic meaning-making in organizations can take place as symbolic activities or as interpretive decision-making (Pfeffer, 1981; Sharon, 1994), such as Buddhist sharing sessions, shaping corporate culture (McLarney & Chung, 2000), or through those in positions of authority and leadership (Gemmell & Oakley, 1992; Sosik, 2000) by imposing mindfulness practices in organizations under the term ‘voluntary’. When such practices are implemented by those in positions of power, this will lead to enforced ideological thinking, which takes advantage of spirituality as an instrumental means in pursuing a goal (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009).

In this study, Buddhist-enacted leadership effectiveness is moderated by the context. Skepticism and distinctive individual approaches to Buddhist practices have challenged spiritual leadership practices and workplace spirituality in general while raising questions about the ‘ends’ of organizational adaptation of such spiritual leadership practices.

7.3.2 A pragmatic approach to social responsibility and sustainability – embracing the good and karmic consequences

The data in this study suggest that Buddhist principles of causal effects (*nhân quả*) and ‘karmic consequences’ (*ngiệp*) in doing business and in compassion play significant roles in shaping leadership perception and approaches to CSR and sustainable organizational practices. Understanding karma and its consequences stimulates leaders who are Buddhist practitioners to relate to this concept in approaching CSR and sustainable practice. As such, for these leaders, implementing CSR and sustainability is no longer a ‘luxury’ as considered by the majority of

companies in Vietnam, where CSR activities are still in their infancy (Nguyen & Truong, 2016), but an area of application for Buddhist practices.

Bhattacharjee and colleagues (2015) introduced a karmic model of leadership development with ‘5Ps’ (*performance of right actions, purpose, people, patience, and passion*) based on Hindu principles. Buddhist-enacted leaders in this study show positive characteristics and viewpoints in relation to all these five aspects. For instance, through the Noble Eightfold Path (Pali: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*; Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) (*Bát Chánh Đạo*) and mindfulness practices:

- Leaders promote ethical and right intentions in dealing with dilemmas or confusion, such as issues relating to situational ethics of bribery in doing business.
- Leaders show positive combined personal, spiritual and organizational purposes aimed at community and social support, such as positive organizational vision in educational, pharmaceutical and medical sectors, among others.
- Leaders show appreciation to people – organizational members and other stakeholders – through altruistic love by applying the principles of depending arising and compassion in organizing professional, skill and spiritual development workshops free for organizational members and the public.
- Leaders show patience through emotional stability and long-term orientation via visions by staying focused, mindful and non-attached to increased complexity or heightened turbulence outside, such as balancing means and ends in long-term vision in the complex context of Vietnam.
- Leaders show passion in their long-term commitment to Buddhist practice through equally applying qualities of sacrifice–patience–forbearance in practising both Buddhism and leadership.

In addition to these 5Ps, Buddhist-enacted leaders place importance on *wisdom* articulation and the concept of *non-attachment* to skilfully tackle contextual challenges associated with CSR.

CSR practices in Vietnam operate in accordance with the iceberg theory: much underneath is not visible. There are increasing charitable and support activities relating to CSR. At the same time there is an increasing rate of violation of CSR in, for example, tax evasion, fraud in business, fake goods, and violation of legal regulations on environmental protection, insurance and labour

safety (Nguyen et al., 2015). There are also signs of disingenuous CSR reports produced to gain public attention that reveal only what corporations want to reveal to the public. Therefore, to have sustainable business visions that promote genuine CSR practices, there is a need for wisdom to know ‘how’ to moderate desires that are not virtuous.

A number of leaders emphasised that it is not realistic, and it is rare in Vietnam, for small and medium-sized organization to achieve all three pillars of CSR. Many leaders shared financial sustainability as their main concern because, unless they are financially sustainable, they will not have the means to think about promoting social or environmental sustainability. CSR can be a ‘luxury’, and in some cases extreme attachment to CSR practices to promote the ‘good’ can lead to unwise decisions that affect organizational survival. Hence, awareness over karmic consequences is vital in acknowledging ‘good’ business practices and the importance of CSR, but overemphasis on such good practice without realistically accepting and realising firm capabilities may result in counterproductive consequences.

Employees’ responses to CSR and organizational sustainability suggest two main issues. Firstly, employees tend to consider charity and social activities as adequate CSR practices, whereas leaders think otherwise. Buddhist-enacted leaders believe that fostering social well-being is a collective action and that what organizations can do best in the transitional context of Vietnam is not simply doing charity work but to operate business in an ethical and non-harmful manner. Employees working in sectors that directly affect the environment have more environmental concerns. Secondly, most Vietnamese companies do not publish public records on CSR, nor do they have official financial statements published; therefore, employees have limited knowledge of firms’ financial responsibility other than financial contributions through social or charity activities.

Buddhist practitioners value modesty, the notion of non-self; hence, social offerings or contributions are not normally announced but initiated anonymously. This reflects a genuine ‘intent of the original action’ as with any skilful motive in responding to karmic consequences. However, ironically, employees are not really satisfied with organizations’ compensation and benefit packages. There are several possible explanations that need further investigation:

- (1) Inconsistencies between the pursuit of financial sustainability, social contribution and supporting employees financially;
- (2) Employees display various levels of attachment to desires and expectations when it comes to financial rewards;
- (3) There is an overemphasis on CSR and sustainability as means to practise Buddhism compared to efforts in creating employee well-being;
- (4) Buddhist-enacted leaders may not have been effective enough in managing their own desires or pursuits – as suggested by responses from employees. The practice of Buddhism clearly is a long-term self-transformational process; thus, a longitudinal study may be useful exploring the above issues.

This study has suggested that Buddhist-enacted leaders show great concern about CSR and sustainable practices, compared to spiritual leaders who are not Buddhist practitioners, as a means of advancing their Buddhist practice. However, the findings show an insignificant result from employees' perspective in terms of employee well-being, although they appreciate their leaders' social activities and contributions. More research with other stakeholders will probably give a clearer result in evaluating Buddhist-enacted leaders' effectiveness towards CSR and sustainability orientations, particularly where these leaders claim to take a more pragmatic approach to CSR and sustainability to avoid extreme pursuits, even in promoting 'the good' in CSR or sustainability.

7.3.3 A transformational journey of the self and leadership

The practice of Buddhism cultivates qualities for individuals to transform themselves. Qualities of patience, sacrifice and diligence are the characteristics of Buddhist-enacted leaders most appreciated by employees. For Buddhist-enacted leaders, these qualities facilitate fundamental and supporting conditions for self and leadership transformation.

To attain CSR and sustainability in Vietnam requires ongoing effort and patience from leaders to tackle the contextual difficulties. In this study, Buddhist-enacted leaders firstly expressed their patience in practising Buddhism, a practice that needs continuous exposure to different contexts

and experiences to learn from in order to articulate wisdom. Secondly, leaders showed patience in pursuing both long-term spiritual and organizational visions and sustainability. Thirdly, Buddhist-enacted leaders demonstrated patience in maintaining emotional intelligence and psychological balance in dealing with situational ethics. Lastly, leaders displayed patience in communicating, coaching and coordinating with employees in fostering objectivity, employee development, and long-term CSR and sustainability pursuits.

These findings support other studies showing that patience involves leaders' mastery of communication skills (Grisham, 2006) and encouragement in their relational style (Russell, 2001) and objectivity (Haque et al., 2017). In Buddhism, patience is one of the virtues of Buddhist *pāramitās* (Keown, 2005). Patience has also been recognised as a leadership virtue in decision making (Fry & Slocum, 2008; Khuntia & Suar, 2004; Sankar, 2003) and as an aspect of transformational leadership (Shamir et al., 1998), servant leadership (Covey, 2006) and spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). Patience accepts delays in the long-term interest (Kupfer, 2007), a positive characteristic that can be acquired through learning and continuous practice (Kupfer, 2007; Sandler, 2005; Sarros et al., 2006), which reflects the nature of Buddhist practice well. Patience facilitates leaders' personal mastery in a continual process of clarifying vision and ensuring objectivity (Senge, 1990) and maintains faith in the vision and habitual exercise of prudence, fortitude and temperance (Mendonca, 2001).

In promoting patience as a virtue associated with self and leadership transformation, sacrifice and diligence are crucial and inseparable qualities. Leadership patience cannot be expressed without sacrificing the 'self', without a desire to show compassion to employees, and without a long-term and sustainable orientation. Likewise, without diligence, personal experience and effort, no knowledge and wisdom can be articulated. For Buddhist-enacted leaders, patience encourages a leader, or any Buddhist practitioner, to have the opportunity to be engaged in the self-transformation process of Buddhist practice through the combination of wisdom articulation and compassion.

As part of a self-transformation practice, patience in Buddhist-enacted leaders needs mastery and challenges to make progress. Patience in this study is based on how one can manage the 'self' –

for example, burning desires – postponing or delaying outcomes for the good of others. Leaders expressed that, all along their journey of combining Buddhism and leadership, they have learnt that they are still in the process of continuous learning.

After considering the outcomes of Buddhist-enacted leadership in the context of Vietnam, the causal powers of context as discussed from a critical realist informed grounded theory approach are further revealed in a number of ways. First, it is relational. The institutional and social contexts such as the lack of trust within the society impacts both leaders' and employees' perceptions on the enactment of leadership from a Buddhist perspectives. As for leaders, their applications of Buddhist principles are customized based on the 'impermanent' nature of context, including approaches within organizations or approaches towards the society. For employees, the instability within the contemporary context affects their trust levels and the way they perceive materialism. For instance, they become more skeptical of leaders' authenticity and part of responding to the insecurity of the social context, they may pursue materialism, which consequently leads to desires and eventually suffering. Second, in examining the outcome of Buddhist-enacted leadership, context in this study reflect a tipping point. This is apparent in how leaders combine compassion and wisdom for leadership effectiveness. For example, leaders expressed that there are points when compassionate acts alone cannot be effective anymore, thus a more rational and pragmatic ways of attending to organizational issues need to take place. All these powers of context has activated a transformational process of Buddhist-enacted leaders through leadership reflexivity, which involves the learning from both managerial achievement and managerial failures.

7.4 Distinctive Buddhist-enacted leadership approaches compared to non-Buddhist spiritual leadership

Though both Buddhist-enacted and non-Buddhist spiritual leaders share some similar leadership characteristics in terms of vision, altruistic love, faith and leadership approaches (see chapter 4), there are some significant differences between the two groups. These differences exist mainly because of the application of specifically Buddhist principles in Buddhist-enacted leadership practices (see Table 7.1).

Table 7. 1 *Buddhist-enacted Leadership Versus Non-Buddhist Spiritual Leadership*

Buddhist enacted leadership versus non-Buddhist spiritual leadership

The embedded cause–effect (*nhân quả*) principle in decision-making

In most leadership decisions, including initiating leadership vision and strategy, Buddhist leaders pay significant attention to causal effects and the karmic consequences (*nghiệp*) of their actions, whereas non-Buddhist leaders mainly base their choices on their individual and professional preferences and the nature of their work.

Less authoritarian approach

Non-Buddhist leaders find company policies effective in lessening workplace deviant behaviour, while Buddhist-enacted leaders believe that maintaining a ‘middle way’ (*trung đạo*) in creating balance between being authoritarian in their approach and embracing autonomy that is needed in certain contexts.

Generous leadership approach

Buddhist-enacted leaders express their generosity (*bố thí*) in helping employees enhance their sense of belonging in every way that they can as part of their Buddhist practice of self-learning and self-transformation compared to non-Buddhist leaders, who believe that employees are responsible to find their own sense of belongingness.

A skilful approach to corporate mindfulness practices

While Buddhist-enacted leaders present various contextually adapted mindfulness practices and approaches at the organizational level, non-Buddhist leaders introduce these practices based on their own experience and preferences at work.

Skilful leadership approach

Buddhist-enacted leaders express a combination of compassion (*từ bi*) and wisdom (*trí tuệ*) in leadership in attending to the ‘impermanent’ nature of the context and pragmatically pursuing long-term social responsibilities and sustainable practices in the complex context of Vietnam, which was less significantly apparent in the view of non-Buddhist leaders.

Context-sensitive leadership approach

Buddhist-enacted leaders consider their leadership as part of their self-transformation, in which their maturity in practice depends on handling contextual paradoxes and challenges. Non-Buddhist leaders, on the other hand, show leadership flexibility in different circumstances; however, context is not emphasised and remains less important compared to leadership skills and company policies.

In general, a Buddhist-enacted leader shows various specific leadership approaches incorporating Buddhist principles, in which responding to context is fundamental. Non-self and non-attachment are evident as underlying principles in monitoring leadership approaches in staying

flexible and less authoritarian and in having less extreme attachments to policies. The state of non-self is a condition that Buddhist practitioners need to experience to transform and train their inner self and wisdom. This expression clearly positions Buddhism as a way of living and reflects the non-religious perception of respondents on Buddhism. In practice, however, those applications are hard and require continuous self-improvement and self-transformation, as highlighted by Buddhist respondents. Having said that, non-Buddhist leaders tended to be more consistent in their leadership styles, while Buddhist leaders show contextually adapted identities, which shows their contextual sensitivity and at the same time challenges their authenticity in inconsistent leadership approaches.

7.5 Lessons from Buddhist-enacted leadership for contemporary leadership and organizational studies and practices

In exploring the last research question: ‘What leadership qualities and practices can be adopted from Buddhism into Eastern and Western contemporary contexts?’, this section examines Buddhist-enacted leadership and its outcomes. The section also highlights the main lessons for leadership practices for contemporary contexts.

Avoiding extremism to allow leadership flexibility

The practice of the ‘Middle Way’ avoids extremism and entails using skilful means, thereby emphasising wisdom-based skilfulness in practice. Buddhist-enacted leadership promotes balance in encouraging autonomy while maintaining control, fostering individuality while rewarding teamwork, and balancing creativity and discipline to attain effectiveness and efficiency. These are leadership practices needed in challenging contexts. The findings of this study support lessons from numerous other leadership studies in such contexts (Bligh, 2016; Braun et al., 2016) in incorporating Buddhist principles and qualities. Table 7.2 provides an interpretation of those lessons from a Buddhist perspective.

Table 7. 2 *Buddhist Principles For Leadership Practices Applicable In The Contemporary Context*

Adaptability

Buddhist-enacted leaders apply the concepts of non-attachment (*không bám chấp*), emptiness (*tánh không*) and compassion (*từ bi*) in forming multiple identities and managing desires in response to the challenging context of Vietnam in general and the skepticism of employees in the country in particular.

Perseverance

Buddhist practice is a self-transformational process that encourages leaders as practitioners to adopt the qualities of patience (*nhẫn nhục*) and diligence (*siêng năng*) to overcome failure and drawbacks in response to the impermanent nature of context and challenges along the leadership journey, and to learn and grow from shortcomings.

Handling paradox

Buddhist-enacted leaders apply emotional intelligence, the ‘Middle Way’ (*Trung Đạo*), skilful means (*phương tiện thiện xảo*) and mindfulness-based (*chánh niệm*) wisdom to handle situational ethics and paradoxes in applying both hard and soft skills to encourage people development.

Leading with values

Buddhist-enacted leaders form altruistic love through their application of a variety of Buddhist qualities such as generosity, sacrifice, transparency and wisdom based on fundamental principles, namely the Four Noble Truths (*Tứ Diệu Đế*), the Noble Eightfold Path (*Bát Chánh Đạo*), Law of Karma (*ngiệp*), causal effects (*nhân quả*), and depending arising (*lý duyên khởi*) in order to generate membership and calling within organizations.

Inventing the future

Buddhist-enacted leaders pay attention to sustainable practices and investment in future generations as a result of their application of concepts of compassion (*từ bi*), causal effects (*nhân quả*) and karma (*ngiệp*).

Sharing responsibility

Buddhist-enacted leaders show commitment to social orientation and CSR practices as a Buddhist practice through compassion (*từ bi*), generosity (*bố thí*), wisdom (*trí tuệ*) and the simplification of desires to contribute to the community and society.

However, as an ongoing transformational process, the application of Buddhist principles in leadership is not without weaknesses, and it is part of a learning process for leaders to develop themselves as a result of mistakes. Context demands the need for leaders to master skilfulness in how they apply Buddhism in leadership. Paradoxes have emerged in how the combination of wisdom and compassion raises employee concerns such as ‘stuck-in-the-middle’ feelings.

Skepticism about leadership authenticity and the instrumentalisation of Buddhism and mindfulness practices in leadership practices highlight how hard it is to maintain a ‘Middle Way’, and this creates concerns over how compassion should be promoted.

Promoting organizational meaningfulness by acknowledging suffering

In demonstrating understanding about meaningfulness, Buddhist-enacted leaders in this study applied a number of Buddhist principles. Meaningfulness is bound to contextual perceptions and circumstances. Leaders display a number of ways of responding to ‘deadly sins’ (disconnecting people from their values, taking employees for granted, giving employees pointless work, treating people unfairly, overriding people’s better judgment, disconnecting people from supportive relationships, and putting people at risk of physical or emotional harm) (Bailey & Madden, 2016, p. 56), and to suffering – identified by both leader and employee respondents – that can jeopardize the sense of meaningfulness at work. Some leaders expressed their frustration and concern about having to be engaged in less-preferred business activities, such as lobbying and relationship-based business. In such cases, skilful interpretation and skilful adaptability helped them to make wise decisions and to stay away from negative agendas by being flexible and not pursuing ‘results at any cost’.

Others shared their experiences of the ‘deadly sins’ in workplaces, especially in situations where leaders had to involve themselves in less preferred and less meaningful activities like bribery. They found that ‘staying in the middle’ facilitates an objective vision and awareness of the pros and cons and karmic consequences of the different decisions they make; hence, they are not attached to extreme pursuits. In the workplace, they indicated that they try to be an example in reminding employees of possible solutions available in different contexts. In promoting these approaches, leaders hope to encourage employees to be mindful and wise in how they perceive meaningfulness rather than being attached to their own singular understanding of meaningfulness.

Individual customisation of mindfulness practices at the organizational level

Introducing mindfulness practices from the individual level to the organizational level is challenging. In Vietnam, according to employees in this study, such an approach is questionable

even if participation in mindfulness practices is voluntary. In promoting wisdom and ethics-based mindfulness, organizations can introduce various practices and allow different departments, even individuals, to pursue the practice they see as practical and relevant to their own ability. This avoids or minimises the impact of imposition that can result in the dysfunctional commodification and instrumentalisation of mindfulness practices.

Fostering a supportive working environment through spirituality

Leaders in this study consider work as a context where people can find meaning. To stimulate and create such a context, a number of leaders were keen on introducing spirituality and Buddhism to create favourable conditions for employees to have spiritual experiences in cultivating strength, creativity, inner self, peace, wisdom and a profound connectedness with co-workers through organizational spiritual activities and individual Buddhist practice.

While leadership is identified as a means for Buddhist practices in this study, spirituality is a means for providing a supportive working environment for employees to experience a meaningful state by engaging in (meaningful) work itself (Scherer & Shook, 1993), developing compassionate relationships with organizational members (Mirvis, 1997), and by finding one's inner self and collective humanity (Driver, 2007; Kriger & Hanson, 1999; Petchsawang, 2008). Buddhist-enacted leaders' approaches in avoiding extreme pursuits allows and encourages employees to handle difficulties at work, clarify their own ideas and recognise their sense of meaningfulness and facilitate membership and calling. This supports Patchsawang and McLean's (2017, p. 20) claim that spiritual programmes 'be adapted to fit the cultural context'.

7.6 Spiritual leadership from a Buddhist perspective

In parallel with Egel and Fry's (2017) efforts in establishing a theoretical transposition of spiritual leadership in an Islamic leadership model, the findings in this study suggest that spiritual leadership can be incorporated in a Buddhist-enacted leadership model based on Buddhist principles and qualities drawn from various Buddhist sutras and pāramitās and displayed in respondent leaders' application of them. Such a leadership model also responds to the 'call for leadership models that can be grounded in the tenets of a faith tradition for those

who recognise no separation between their practice of their faith tradition and their work’ (Egel & Fry, 2017, p. 78).

Incorporating Buddhist principles in Buddhist-enacted leadership advances spiritual leadership theory in a number of ways: (1) enabling and facilitating practical application in organizations or contexts that value and apply Buddhism; (2) proposing spiritual leadership based on universally applicable Buddhist spiritual leadership qualities; and (3) promoting spiritual leadership theory that can be applied in cross-cultural organizational settings, both secular and those dominated by different religions such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism (Fry & Kriger, 2009; Kriger & Seng, 2005). Table 7.3 below sets out spiritual leadership approaches from a Buddhist perspective.

Table 7. 3 *An Interpretation Of Spiritual Leadership In Buddhist-Enacted Leadership*

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP		
	<i>Buddhist Interpretation</i>	<i>Buddhist-enacted Leadership Application</i>
Inner Life	<p><i>Right mindfulness</i> (Pāli: <i>sammā-sati</i>, Sanskrit <i>samyak-smṛti</i>) is a process of wisdom (Sanskrit: <i>prajñā</i>; Pāli: <i>paññā</i>) articulation, a Buddhist ethical-based and wisdom-based mindfulness state that enhances right understanding and awareness of the ‘self’ and the universe based on moment awareness and past experiences.</p> <p><i>Mindfulness practices</i> are aimed at enhancing intellectual, physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.</p>	<p>Combination of <i>practices</i> such as <i>hara</i> breathing, kundalini-chakra meditation, mantra, samatha, vipassana, satipatthana, etc.; and <i>wisdom enabling practices</i> based on Buddhist principles of the Noble Eightfold Path (Pāli: <i>ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo</i>; Sanskrit: <i>āryāṣṭāṅgamārga</i>), the Four Noble Truths (Sanskrit: <i>catvāri āryasatyāni</i>; Pāli: <i>cattāri ariyasaccāni</i>), emptiness (Sanskrit: <i>Śūnyatā</i>; Pāli: <i>Suññatā</i>), and non-attachment.</p> <p>Customization of mindfulness practices in organizations.</p>
Hope/Faith	Leadership expectations are moderated and subject to change by the impermanent nature of the context that articulates a non-extreme attitude based on wisdom.	Leadership expectations are initiated with Buddhist leadership qualities of flexibility, patience, emptiness, non-self and diligence.
Vision	Leadership vision is associated with an ongoing transformational journey, dependent on the appreciation of the principles of impermanence (Pāli: <i>anicca</i> ; Sanskrit: <i>anitya</i>), cause-effect and	Leadership vision is implemented based on the following principles: Depending arising and dependency on all stakeholders (or sentient beings); moderating leadership desires by karmic

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

	depending arising (Sanskrit: <i>Pratītyasamutpāda</i> ; Pali: <i>Paṭiccasamuppāda</i>).	consequences; balancing leadership means and ends; and encouraging compassionate and social orientation.
Altruistic Love	Leaders' altruistic love is compassion (<i>karuṇā</i>) produced through the practice of combining care, concern, appreciation for all sentient beings, and wisdom.	Altruistic love is expressed in various ways based on the Ten <i>Pāramitās</i> of the Flower Garland Sutra, qualities of tolerance, transparency, the Middle Way and non-self.

SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL & WELL-BEING

Membership	A sense of membership reflects a sense of belonging and community formed from the appreciation of depending arising and compassion.	Membership is enhanced through empowering leadership, practical approaches of situational leadership, leadership coaching, and leader adaptability and flexibility.
Calling	A sense of calling reflects a meaningful purpose in life and is generated from understanding causal effects, the relationships between suffering and meaningfulness, Karma (Sanskrit: <i>karman</i> ; Pāli: <i>kamma</i>) and karmic consequences from wholesome and unwholesome actions.	Combining wisdom and compassion to help individuals recognise sources of suffering and their relationships to meaningfulness at both individual and organizational levels.

Based on the preliminary quantitative phase and the mixed-methods approach in this study, a social theory of the formation of Buddhist-enacted leadership emerges. The limitations of the preliminary quantitative phased have been addressed through a deep investigation into the mechanisms and powers of the context in exploring and examining Buddhist-enacted leadership using a critical-realist grounded-theory approach and the involvement of both leaders and employees. This has enabled the researcher to present a social theory of the emergence of Buddhist-enacted leadership and highlight the applicability and limitations of Fry's spiritual leadership in an engaged-Buddhist context.

First, the lack of trust within the transitional context of Vietnam has activated leaders' aspirations to incorporate the application of Buddhist principles in leadership to advance their sense-making and openness to the impermanent nature of context. This is apparent from people's

feelings of unrest and insecurity in Vietnamese society. Based on leaders' experience in practising Buddhism and their secular interpretations of Buddhist concepts, leaders demonstrated a contextually relevant faith in the practical application of Buddhist philosophy in leadership that rejects any correspondence with spiritualism and superstitious beliefs. This has led to a compassionate but also flexible, skillful and pragmatic leadership approach to tackling the country's institutional and social challenges.

While leaders' altruistic love shaped by their leadership visions and inspiration from Buddhist philosophies is demonstrated diversely, based on their context-sensitive applications of various Buddhist principles aimed at positive organizational and social outcomes. While bringing employee well-being through membership and calling and leadership efforts in encouraging wisdom-enacted employee development in various ways, as well as showing social responsibility, leaders' authenticity and consistency in Buddhist-enacted leadership are challenged by context. Paradoxically, context is both stimulation for Buddhist-enacted leadership and a provocative constraint. This requires leadership transformation as an ongoing process and the embracing of leadership reflexivity to attend to the impermanent nature of context. These needs have highlighted the fact that Buddhist-enacted leadership in particular and spiritual leadership in general are self-transformation processes that cannot be fully examined solely through the popular mono-quantitative methods (as in the preliminary quantitative phase of this study).

Second, a major departure of Buddhist-enacted leadership from Fry's spiritual leadership theory in this study can be seen in inner life, vision, hope/faith and altruistic love. Mindfulness practices in forming an inner life are not limited to moment awareness as highlighted in Fry's spiritual leadership: they also involve the articulation of wisdom based on fundamental Buddhist practices. Additionally, the transfer of mindfulness practices from the individual level to the organizational level remains problematic, which should be re-examined in Fry's spiritual leadership model. On the other hand, hope/faith and leadership vision are highly dependent on context. The complex cultural interpretations of faith involving spiritual and other religious values also highlight the need to revisit the definition of spirituality from a Christian perspective that shapes the constructs of Fry's spiritual leadership theory. Lastly, altruistic love expressed in

Buddhist-enacted leadership is skilful means: some means have to be combined, and some have to be emphasised more than others in order to respond skilfully to contextual challenges. These differences inform the need for a context theory of spiritual leadership, in which it is important to address the causal mechanisms and powers of context in shaping spiritual orientation and applications in leadership practice in general.

These differences help us to respond to findings from studies of the dark side of leadership and management by, for example, rejecting commodification and the degrading of corporate mindfulness practices into merely stress-reduction or moment-awareness practices. This study provides a less extreme perspective on expectations and hope and an appreciation of ‘means to an end’. The contextualization of spiritual leadership theory from a Buddhist perspective has much to offer to critical perspectives of contemporary leadership and management studies. This would benefit from further investigation in a longitudinal study. Buddhist-enacted leadership is a self-transformational process and involves the search for the Buddha-nature – the original nature present in all beings which, when realised, leads to enhanced wisdom for enlightenment in living and in delivering practical, effective and meaningful leadership practices that would benefit a wider range of audiences than merely that in this specific study.

Finally, the following chapter summarises and concludes the study. Chapter Eight highlights theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of the research and identifies research limitations in the study and avenues for future research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

This final chapter summarises the key findings of the study in response to the research questions and highlights its contributions as well as its limitations, with suggestions for future research.

8.1 Summary of key findings

This study of the application of Buddhist teachings in leadership practices and its impact on developing sustainable and socially responsible leadership in the context of Vietnam has confirmed that, though there are causal relationships between Buddhist-enacted leadership and organizational outcomes, there are still significant concerns over its authenticity in practice. In adopting a mixed methods approach in this study, the research captured different perspectives of both leaders and followers. The project included interviews of 31 leaders (both Buddhist-enacted and non-Buddhist spiritual leaders) and a survey-based examination of employees' reactions to such leadership approaches (n=376), together with an analysis of observational material. The research question is first revisited and a summary and discussion of the empirical results in relation to it are provided.

How do spiritual leaders interpret and enact Buddhist teachings and principles in organizations in the context of Vietnam?

In examining the research question of the study, the findings showed that the distinctive and complex contextual nature of Vietnam as a developing nation has contributed enormously to how Buddhism is interpreted and practised in Vietnamese society at large and in leadership in particular. Transitional Vietnam, with its rapid changes since 1986, has brought feelings of insecurity and distrust among the Vietnamese. These have fostered yearnings for a spiritual movement and increased engaged Buddhism in Vietnam. While traditional spiritual and folk practices have been deeply embedded in the daily life of the Vietnamese people, there is now tendency for them to move away from those practices and to embrace engaged Buddhism. This movement is taking place due to the fact that traditional spiritual practices (more accurately

described as spiritualism rather than spirituality) are heavily dependent on rituals. These the younger generations do not find practical anymore.

On the other hand, Buddhism is appreciated as a life philosophy that is practicable and has much to offer today. There is also a distinctive interpretation in Vietnam separating spiritual practices (*nghi thức tâm linh*) and Buddhist practices (*hánh Phật pháp*). While the former is associated with rituals and prayers, the latter is embedded in individuals' daily practices, including how they perceive things, how they form their attitudes, and how they solve actual problems both in life and at work. Therefore, for the leader respondents who are Buddhist practitioners, they consider Buddhism as a life practice that involves personal effort and transformation, including the mastery of leadership practices in challenging context, which is different from being spiritual or religious. For them, the main difference is that while spiritual and religious practices provide rules and guidelines to live by, Buddhism provides freedom to explore personal strengths and weaknesses to generate contextually relevant and reflexive practices rather static ones. These in the opinion of the respondents are more effective in the contemporary setting, especially in relation to the transition taking place in Vietnam, where weak law enforcement is a major problem that requires skilful interpretation that involves the whole system rather than just a few players. Therefore, flexibility in enacting, combining, and even rejecting certain Buddhist principles in response to the context in transition has proved to be helpful for leaders. Particularly in the Vietnamese context, Buddhist principles of impermanence (*vô thường*), depending arising (*duyên khởi*), compassion (*từ bi*), wisdom (*trí tuệ*), non-attachment (*không bám chấp*), the Middle Path (*Trung Đạo*), and mindfulness (*chánh niệm*), to mention just a few, are considered important in practising Buddhism. Findings in this study show that the incorporation of these principles into leadership practices shapes Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics such as flexibility, compassion, ability to manage desires, emotional intelligence, and social orientation.

Buddhist-enacted leadership by study respondents is a process of self-transformation, operating as a skilful means through which multiple leadership identities flexibly and mindfully respond to contextual challenges. This approach is unique to Buddhist-enacted leaders compared to non-Buddhist leaders. The complex setting of Vietnam fosters the application of non-attachment,

non-self, and compassion in crafting flexible leadership, which is initiated by various means and leadership identities to appropriately and skilfully respond to particular circumstances. Incorporating mindfulness practices in leadership encourages Buddhist-enacted leaders to combine past experience with moment awareness, compassion with wisdom in decision-making, and skilfully coping with situational ethics. Furthermore, the practice of Buddhism is an ongoing process of learning about the universe through self-reflection and self-transformation. It is not limited in the sense of having to apply specific Buddhist principles, but more about the ability to customise principles and practices to fit with the context of the audience. This 'customisation' in leadership practices requires compassionate leadership but not without wisdom-embedded and context-sensitive practices that allow leaders to objectively, mindfully and skilfully respond to the contextual needs.

Buddhist-enacted leadership, therefore, is a self-transformational journey, through which leaders learn to adapt and, most importantly, learn from mistakes. As such, Buddhist-enacted leadership is not without its limitations. Its authenticity is challenged by the adoption of multiple identities, resulting in inconsistencies in leadership style. This poses challenging questions as a result of the skepticism that characterises Vietnamese society.

The Buddhist-enacted leadership model is the main result of this study and it clearly demonstrates the manifestation of Buddhist principles in leadership practices and their effectiveness in the context of Vietnam. Context plays a crucial role in leaders' choice and application of Buddhist principles in leadership. The characteristics of a transitional economy with weak law enforcement, the dominating one-party rule together with corrupted practices, the emergence of issues with trust in the country, and the lack of criticality in information processing and interpretation including the understanding and manifestation of spiritual and Buddhist practices have all affected how leaders enact Buddhism in their leadership practices.

Due to the distinctiveness and complex nature of the setting, Buddhist-enacted leadership in Vietnam is characterised by a process of learning and self-transformation. This process involves the enactment of flexible and mindful leadership under multiple leadership identifies as skilful means to respond to the context in general and to individual differences in particular. A skilful

means approach allows leaders to dynamically and flexible apply, modify or reject Buddhist principles in their leadership practices as they feel appropriate in attending to specific situations. The Buddhist-enacted model therefore embraces context-sensitivity, reflexivity and flexibility in leadership practices, especially in manifesting Buddhist principles in leadership styles, rather than proposing a prescriptive singular definition of Buddhist-enacted leadership practice.

In examining the effectiveness of Buddhist-enacted leadership in organizational outcomes, the findings suggest that flexibility and compassion are the most appreciated leadership characteristics. Buddhist-enacted leaders express a pragmatic approach to social responsibility and sustainability, and while efforts have been made from leaders' perspectives to improve their emotional intelligence and ability to manage desires, a number of employees and observations show that they are less effective and significant compared to other Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics. These characteristics are moderated by a lack of trust and the levels of skepticism within society at large and among employees in particular. Although the findings indicate that employees appreciate their leaders' efforts in their supportive approaches in building sustainable and responsible businesses, and leaders emphasise the principle of 'means to an end', organizational outcomes such as employee satisfaction, commitment and productivity were moderately low. This result raises four issues:

(1) Improving living standards is still a great concern in Vietnam as a developing country. Employees are still concerned about their compensation benefits, besides their social responsibilities. Leaders emphasised financial responsibility as a means to enhancing social and environmental responsibilities and organizational sustainability. Financial responsibility and its means are significant in Vietnam, especially in relation to transition, which makes people feel less secure.

(2) The social context, employees' expectations and levels of skepticism have all moderated leadership effectiveness. It is obviously hard for leaders to have the ability to manage desires in the transitional context of Vietnam; however, this does apply to employees' desires and expectations as well as institutional desires within the nation. From a Buddhist perspective, as long as extreme attachment to desires exists either in leadership, in different organizational players or in higher institutional levels, there will be various forms of suffering associated with

such desires. Therefore, understanding that leadership agency is affected by contextual constraints is crucial.

(3) Leaders have not expressed enough skilfulness in building and gaining trust from followers and in promoting Buddhist ethics-based mindfulness practices in good faith at the organizational level, resulting in these practices being perceived by employees as instrumentalisation and commodification. Obviously, the ‘skilful means’ approach here involves a process of self-reflexivity in leaders and a process of self-transformation in their adaptability to different contexts.

(4) There is an overemphasis on means-to-an-end approaches in social responsibility practices. Leaders pay a lot of attention to social orientation, which is evident in their socially focused visions and missions. However, in transitional and insecure Vietnam, especially where CSR is not among individuals’ expectations, not all employees understand the important meaning of CSR and sustainable practices in particular. Contextual constraints have fostered pragmatic orientations in practices oriented at social responsibilities.

What is evident from these findings is that, as much as it is crucial for leaders to be contextually sensitive and skilful in their leadership in the context of Vietnam, in organizations leaders are not the only actors who make decisions: there are shareholders and other stakeholders who should share responsibilities as well (Hasnas, 2013). There are structural, cultural, institutional and contextual constraints beyond leadership (Raelin, 2016), so leaders are not free agents and are not the only ones who are responsible for all organizational problems (Tourish, 2014). In this study, in the overall context of Vietnam, existing ‘desires’ in various forms, at both individual and organizational levels, moderate Buddhist-enacted leadership effectiveness.

The examination of Buddhist-enacted leadership from both leaders’ and employees’ perspectives in the transitional context of Vietnam in this study supports the view that incorporating Buddhism in leadership is a self-transformational leadership practice that takes time and learning for mastery. The findings support the view that leader agency is not absolute (Tourish, 2014), however, and both inner and outer contexts of the organization, together with the organizational and institutional actors, have significant roles in shaping leadership orientation.

Incorporating Buddhist principles in leadership practices brings out a number of best practices, such as avoiding extremism to allow leadership flexibility, acknowledging the role of suffering in promoting organizational meaningfulness, allowing individual customization of mindfulness practices at the organizational level, and fostering a supportive working environment through spirituality. This study has identified the leadership qualities and practices of combining wisdom and compassion for contextual leadership adaptability, handling paradoxes through mindfulness and skilful means, leading by example and with values, being responsive to the future, being generous and compassionate in sharing responsibility socially, and being patient and diligent in responding to failure and in building relationships in the application of Buddhism in leadership in the specific context of Vietnam.

A skilful means approach in leadership is a significant finding of this study, and this approach, emphasising contextual leadership practices and skills, is also needed in other contemporary contexts, according to a number of scholars in their calls for enhanced leadership development (Braun et al., 2016; DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). This approach can be applied in solving leadership dilemmas by combining wisdom and compassion and personal reflexive self-transformation in practice. The underlying notion of non-attachment embedded in ‘skilful means’ brings a new approach to the familiar studies based on attachment theory, both in organizational and in leadership studies. Thus, the skilful means approach introduces flexible practices not just for leadership but for organizational studies, and a new way of interpreting and solving contemporary organizational and leadership problems based on principles of impermanence, depending arising, causal effect and the causes of suffering.

This study has also responded to criticisms of the dominant mono-quantitative method in examining spiritual leadership. It has used a critical-realist approach informed by grounded theory as a methodology to capture the transformation process involved in the formation of spiritual leadership and to unpack the mechanisms and powers of context in manifesting spiritual leadership. Furthermore, in applying Buddhist philosophy in spiritual leadership in a transitional context, the study highlights concerns associated with the validity of some constructs of Fry’s spiritual leadership theory, which can benefit from further investigation.

8.2 Contributions of the study

This section describes the theoretical and methodological contributions of the study as well as its practical implications for leadership practitioners.

8.2.1 Theoretical contributions

Towards a context theory of spiritual leadership

In this study, in relation to Fry's spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003, 2005), context appears as a major factor influencing spiritual leadership. His spiritual leadership theory is built upon both a broad understanding of spirituality (Horton, 1950; Smith, 1992) and a Christian perspective. The findings of the preliminary quantitative phase in this study, however, show that, although his model fits this study's data, it has a number of weak predictors. In further examining their less important predicting roles in the model, the qualitative phase of study highlighted that the leader respondents who were Buddhist practitioners generally did not claim themselves to be spiritual. Spirituality in different contexts clearly can be interpreted in various ways. This highlights the controversial spiritual aspects in spiritual leadership theory, as claimed by Benefiel (2005). On the other hand, the critical-realist-informed grounded-theory approach and observations in the qualitative phase, together with the examination of Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics from employees' perspective in the follow-up quantitative phase, demonstrated the complex role of context in the Vietnamese transitional economy as mechanisms and powers that have not been addressed in Fry's spiritual leadership model.

This fact emphasises the contextualisation of an understanding of spirituality in general, suggesting the need for a redefinition of the 'spiritual' aspects in the theory and developing a new contextual theory of spiritual leadership. Additionally, the findings support the view of Benefiel (2005) and Rozuel and McGhee (2012) that making a spiritual journey – this can be defined differently in different contexts and religions – requires inward transformation of the self and practice that might not be the same as achieving organizational commitment or productivity but instead a top-down management attempt to control or exploit employees. In fact, the term spirituality in this study was distinctively interpreted by respondents in terms of their own experience, cultural values and social constraints. Without understanding and practising

spirituality in its context, spirituality can easily be misinterpreted as just another instrument for manipulation.

Contextualising CSR and sustainable practices

In exploring Buddhist-enacted leadership in this study, there are a number of interesting findings on Buddhist leaders' approaches to important contemporary issues such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. Leadership visions of CSR and sustainability were demonstrated distinctively in the context of Vietnam in terms of pragmatism. This is due to the paradoxical role of context as a potential causal mechanism identified in this study, the insecurity the transitional context of Vietnam, and the role of materialism in people's perception in general in relation to increasing basic living standards. Buddhist-enacted leaders' pragmatic approach to CSR and sustainable business practices illustrates the significance of contextualising CSR and sustainable practices. In the context of Vietnam, the interpretation of CSR is still fragmented, and more attention is paid to increasing living standards through financial sustainability, which is prioritised ahead of other social responsibilities. The findings in this study support the view of some scholars that, in developing countries like Vietnam, more effort is paid to philanthropic approaches than to other CSR practices (Amaeshi et al, 2006; Frynas, 2005; Jamali et al, 2009; Visser, 2006). Furthermore, leaders in this study emphasise that being socially responsible in Vietnam involves more than just company codes of ethics or best business practices but skilfulness, flexibility, adaptiveness and sometimes even self-sacrifice in dealing with situational ethics in relation, for example, to bribery or corruption.

The findings in this study also respond to calls for contextualising CSR and examining the contextual factors, reciprocal responsibilities, and moral behaviour and motives involved in the practice (Idemudia, 2011, Leshkowich, 2006; Pratt, 1991; Sheehy, 2015; Wang et al., 2016). The study also contributes to interdisciplinary perspectives of CSR studies, especially in promoting the application of Buddhist philosophies in sense-making and consideration of karmic consequences in shaping leadership orientation to CSR and sustainability practices.

The application of Buddhist principles in CSR and sustainable practices

The findings of this study add to those of other recent studies of Abeydeera et al. (2016) in examining the relationship between Buddhism and sustainable practices. While they revealed applicable and supportive Buddhist interpretations and principles of CSR and sustainable practices, owing to the distinctive context of this study, some principles were emphasised more than others for their practicability. Examples are skilful means and the combination of wisdom and compassion rather than compassion and generosity alone. This is a characteristic of a developing country undergoing transition in how it makes sense of social responsibilities and sustainability responsibilities in a distinctive way due to lack of trust and insecurity leading to materialism and individualism. This study supports the notion that context plays a crucial role as a potential causal factor in choosing the appropriate Buddhist principles that shape CSR or sustainable approaches. Context here refers to both the outer context (organizational, social and national contexts) and inner context (personal characteristics, capability, experience and knowledge) of leadership roles, which significantly influence organizational orientations and leadership visions.

Towards a Buddhist leadership model

The findings in this study contribute a comprehensive Buddhist-enacted leadership model, with empirical support, alongside Kriger and Seng's (2005) conceptualisation of a contingency theory of leadership in relation to major religions. The model highlights how the role of the contemporary context both fosters and moderates leadership effectiveness. Context fosters a skilful means approach to leadership that responds mindfully under multiple leadership identities in tackling contextual challenges. The means refers to various Buddhist principles that are subject to customisation and adaptation when necessary in a given context. However, contextual constraints can be powerful in challenging leadership practices, as is the case in this study. Context-sensitivity and leadership reflexivity are strongly emphasised in the model.

These findings further develop Kemavuthanon and Duberley's (2009) research on the Buddhist view of leadership and research examining leadership from religious viewpoints, including the Buddhist viewpoint in non-Western contexts (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Fernando, 2007; Fernando et al., 2008). Since respondents in this study take a secular approach to Buddhist

practices that are suitable to their own individual contexts, while recognising all the alternative Buddhist practices and paths available for practice, the model distinctively introduces a skilful-means approach and a multiple leadership-identity approach, contributing to scholarly conversations on leadership development.

In addition, the concept of non-attachment, embedded in the Buddhist-enacted leadership model, has much to offer to scholarly thought and discussion in Western leadership studies. Findings of this study suggest that the notion of non-attachment shapes a distinctive perspective on the ‘self’ and on leadership identity construction that facilitates a reflexive and flexible leadership style. Non-attachment also appeared as a significant factor underlying Buddhist-enacted leadership practices and approaches in responding to context and, in particular, in tackling its paradoxical effects in Vietnam in transition, such as the ability to combine compassion and wisdom as best practice. Non-attachment also highlights the need to examine the nature and level or strength of attachment in leader-follower relationships to avoid excessive attachment that through dominating desires and expectations can lead to suffering. Moreover, leader-follower relationships should acknowledge the impermanent nature of the phenomenon of attachment rather than being based on predominant attachment and expectations. This finding contributes to the examination of forms of attachment and non-attachment in the literature of leader-follower relationship rather than supporting the likelihood of positive outcomes of secure attachment in leader-follower relationships.

Positioning mindfulness practices at individual and corporate levels

This study highlights the importance of differentiating between individual and corporate levels of mindfulness practice. Too often in the literature on corporate mindfulness these two levels are not distinguished even though mindfulness is essentially a practice that is personal and therefore cannot be transferred wholesale to the corporate level. This issue was also reported as a limitation in testing Fry’s spiritual leadership model in the context of Vietnam in this study. Conceptual misinterpretations and methodological inconsistencies in mindfulness have been stressed as one of the weaknesses in the ‘inner life’ construct of Fry’s spiritual leadership model.

There are two major contributions of findings in this study: (1) emphasising mindfulness practice as an individual and contextual choice; and (2) embracing Buddhist ethics-based and wisdom-embedded ‘right mindfulness’ from the Noble Eightfold Path rather than narrowly considering mindfulness as solely stress-reduction techniques (Vu & Gill, 2017). These findings match the conceptualisation of Buddhist-based mindfulness practices by Bodhi (2011), Gethin (2011), and Purser & Milillo (2015) and provide further practical guidance based on empirical evidence to support this view instead of promoting popular secular interpretations and applications of mindfulness as stress-reduction techniques (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 2003). These findings also support a revisiting of Fry’s spiritual leadership theory and how it frames ‘inner life’ as mindfulness practices.

Introducing the application of Buddhist principles into organizational studies

Bowlby’s (1969/1982) attachment theory and the concept of attachment in general is familiar in various organizational studies, especially in regard to leader–follower relationships (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Fletcher et al., 2006; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007; Simpson & Rholes, 2012; Thomas et al., 2013) and workplace meaningfulness, for example the search for meaning and purpose (Fox, 1993; Terkel, 1985). However, the findings of this study suggest that certain types of attachment and desires lead to suffering and that extreme attachment to secure relationships and even meaningfulness can be counterproductive.

The Buddhist principles of non-attachment, impermanence and the findings of this study are compatible with a recent study by Bailey and Madden (2016, 2017) suggesting that meaningfulness is not a static state of being that arises at transcendent moments in time and exists in temporality. Extreme forms of attachment such as some in promoting workplace spirituality, which in the case of this study concern the practices of mindfulness and ‘good’ leadership out of compassion, can be counterproductive. The findings of the study suggest that context insensitivity and attachment even to goodwill in leadership may make employees question leaders’ authenticity and feel that spirituality, mindfulness practices and engaged Buddhism are being hypocritically ‘instrumentalized’ in organizations. Thus, leaders need to reaffirm the importance of non-attachment in cultivating context sensitivity and context responsiveness through the combination of compassion and wisdom shaping a skillful means

approach for leadership effectiveness based on their reflexive learning in their experience of failures in leadership. Buddhist concepts such as skillful means, non-attachment and emptiness can therefore be further examined and explored to investigate their impact in various leadership practices.

Additionally, the application of such Buddhist principles in doing research in organizational studies responds to Linstead and colleagues' (2014, pp. 178, 180) call for more importing of theory and new analytical concepts from other disciplines to more fully explain new or neglected organizational phenomena that are not often found currently in organizational theories or, indeed, that are yet to be found.

8.2.2 Methodological contributions

One of the main methodological contributions of this study is how mixed methods were used in spiritual leadership research. The mixed methods approach responds to the call for a shift away from positivist techniques to qualitative techniques and other methods to explore spiritual leadership (Benefiel et al., 2014).

Most previous studies of spiritual leadership have used only mono-method studies adopting quantitative methods. There is arguably an overemphasis on quantitative methods in spiritual leadership which, according to many scholars, fails to acknowledge the transformational process of the self and practice associated with the spiritual journey of leadership (Ayranci & Semercioz, 2011; Bodia & Ali, 2012; Chen & Yang, 2012; Chen et al., 2012; Fry, Hannah, Noel, & Walumbwa, 2011; Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Fry et al., 2017; Hunsaker, 2016; Javanmard, 2012) and to provide answers for the controversial definition of 'spirituality' that the theory is built upon (Benefiel, 2005; McGhee & Rozuel, 2012).

The preliminary quantitative phase of this study foregrounds the limitations of Fry's spiritual leadership model in examining spiritual leadership. The formation of spirituality in leadership practices is a processual phenomenon, so a quantitative approach has limitations in exploring and examining the transformation process of leaders that comes along with it. In addition, spirituality

exists in complex forms of interpretation and diverse forms of practice based on differences in values in different cultures. It is therefore insufficient to explore and examine the formation of spirituality in leadership without taking into consideration the powerful role of context. Accordingly, testing Fry's spiritual leadership theory in the context of Vietnam has raised concerns and issues about its validity and how its constructs were based on a Christian perspective that seemed less applicable in an engaged-Buddhist context.

To respond to these limitations highlighted by the preliminary quantitative phase of the study, this study introduced a mixed-method approach. The lack of criticality and context awareness in Fry's spiritual leadership model has informed the need to explore the deeper meaning of context shaping spiritual leadership. Therefore, by applying a critical-realist-informed grounded-theory approach in the qualitative phase of this study, the mechanism of context was explored, providing a holistic picture of how and why leaders enacted Buddhist principles in their leadership. This responds to the call by Kempster and Parry (2011) to embrace such an approach in leadership studies. Each of the constructs in spiritual leadership theory was explored from a Buddhist perspective and distinctive approaches and interpretations of spirituality and spiritual leadership identified that otherwise could not have been investigated using a quantitative mono-method alone.

However, there are also concerns over how a grounded-theory approach may suffer from over-interpretation of site-specific effects, with over generalizability (Kempster & Parry, 2011). Therefore rather than relying on a single source, this study integrated in-depth semi-structured interviews, personal and participatory observations, internal documentation and a supporting quantitative phase with open-ended questions to explore employees' perspectives on Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership. It provides a holistic picture of Buddhist-enacted leadership with relevant contextual mechanisms impacting on this leadership style and identifies distinctive as well as generalizable practices of Buddhist-enacted leadership. Adopting a mixed-methods approach also enabled an exploration and addressing of the 'how' and 'why' rather than merely a superficial explanation of a Western theory in a non-Western context. Accordingly, this study responds to the critical claim that Asian management research tends to use mainly the quantitative method rather than a qualitative or mixed-method approach (White, 2002).

The mixed-methods approach in this study was able to provide a holistic, contextual portrayal of spiritual leadership with a multi-perspective view from both leaders and followers while allowing the salient role of context to emerge in support of a context theory of spiritual leadership. The rich data from different respondents also highlight the departure from leaders' expectations of spiritual leadership compared to employees' interpretations and how they actually recognise those leadership practices, thereby foregrounding the need to review theory versus practice in relation to the context.

The second main methodological contribution of this study is that the contextualisation of the research, as suggested by a number of organizational scholars (Johns, 2006; Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Whetten, 2009), acknowledges various context-sensitive issues and implications in adopting this approach rather than merely adapting an Anglo-American theory directly to local contexts. As a native Vietnamese, the author is aware of the sensitive and challenging issues involved in doing research and the uncomfortable relationship between business practitioners and academic researchers. Because of the generally low response rate in surveys in Vietnam, the complex historical context of the country and the sensitivity of the topic in this research, a mixed methods approach was adopted to more effectively and practically examine the Buddhist-enacted leadership approach to the relatively new concepts of CSR and sustainability.

Buddhist practitioners, especially those in leadership positions, do not publicly announce themselves as Buddhist. Therefore, a significant amount of time was spent networking, building relationships and participating in select communities prior to conducting this research. This was useful in getting to know Buddhist communities as well as to actually form a basic understanding of the context involved. Mixed methods provided richer data and responses in the context of Vietnam than a quantitative mono-method could have done.

The interpretation of the results is also contextually sensitive, combining both the mainstream literature and personal relevant local knowledge of the context. By contextualising this research, locally relevant leadership and managerial knowledge and its implications were generated (Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004) and contribute to the literature on spiritual leadership and the

implications for organizational studies. Highlighting the strengths and practicability of contextualising research in this study responds to critics of the contextually insensitive Asian research (Meyer, 2006; White, 2002) in the hope that the methodological contribution would be a good example for the replication and diffusion of research ideas in other complex and sensitive contexts.

8.2.3 Practical contributions

Implications for leaders

This study provides various practical implications for Buddhist-enacted leaders, non-Buddhist spiritual leaders and leadership practices in general.

For Buddhist-enacted leaders

Though the application of Buddhist principles in leadership practice does have various merits, leaders need to be aware of when, how often and to what extent they bring such principles into practice. The receptiveness and context of followers play a crucial role in this. Too much flexibility in forming leadership identities and approaches can be considered as leadership inconsistency, which can even worsen employees' skepticism rather than improving it. Bringing Buddhist principles into leadership practices needs to align with leadership authenticity. Leadership authenticity here refers to leaders' sensitivity to the context of audience in managing their own desires and in considering leadership as a means for Buddhist practice.

Leaders also need to be cautious and selective in proselytising or advocating Buddhism and mindfulness practices at the organizational and social levels. A broader audience may associate this with significant risks and responsibilities, especially in the context of Vietnam, where skepticism and varying educational levels and backgrounds exist. If such practices are not understood as individual choices, they can be counterproductive for both leaders and followers. Neither followers nor leaders necessarily benefit from Buddhist practice: followers may adopt a non-customised inappropriate and ineffective Buddhist/mindfulness practice for themselves, whereas leaders are held responsible for the commodification and instrumentalisation of

Buddhism and mindfulness practices. The practice of combining wisdom and compassion can be greatly beneficial.

For non-Buddhist spiritual leaders

It is good to take a secular view of spirituality in organizations without imposing particular spiritual or religious practices. However, there should not be too much emphasis on leaders' personal or professional preferences or overdependence on company policies without considering the situation and context of followers. Non-Buddhist leaders can also benefit from more contextually flexible and skilful leadership approaches.

For leadership practices in general

In contemporary contexts, leadership flexibility, adaptability and skilfulness are needed to deal with contextual challenges. More importantly, contextualising leadership practices is crucial, especially in Eastern high-context cultures²² like Vietnam. Other findings in Vietnam also show that there are distinctive situational ethical issues, such as institutionalised bribery and that best practices or commonly known practices in the West are not always the ultimate solution (Nguyen et al., 2016). There is no precise or singular definition of being ethical. In fact, while bribery is considered unethical in the West, studies in Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2016; Matsushima & Yamada, 2016) suggest that the transactional cost of bribery can actually be perceived as a form of 'best practice' in some specific industries such as the pharmaceutical industry. Leaders in both Eastern and Western contemporary contexts would benefit from less extreme but more mindful leadership styles based on personal leadership experience, awareness of contextualization and greater acknowledgement of followers.

Implications for CSR and sustainable practices

The pragmatic approach to CSR shown by Buddhist-enacted leaders in this study indicates the significance of contextualising CSR and sustainable business practices. Like most developing contexts, where there is a lack of institutionalisation of practices and more personal and religious

²² In high-context cultures, people are deeply involved with one another and depend more on connections and relationships (Hall, 1976).

motives behind them (Jamali et al., 2009; Visser, 2006), a ‘means-to-an-end’ approach to CSR practices may be appropriate. For example, in the case of Vietnam in this study, there needs to be a significant increase in the standard of living as well as in serious anti-corruption practices to improve the overall level of material comfort and skepticism among the people before further attention and efforts can effectively address social or environmental sustainable practices and responsibilities. Having said that, financial sustainability should remain one of the many ‘means’ available and appropriately applied to different contextual needs for the future fulfillment of other types of sustainable practices and responsibilities.

Other than that, it takes an ongoing long-term process and investment in educating people and promoting sustainable and long-term-oriented business practices to increase people’s overall awareness of the pillars of CSR other than merely its financial one. Without a doubt, CSR and sustainable practices need support from other stakeholders, which means that people need to be aware of social issues, not just locally but globally. Findings in this study reaffirm that there are differences between Western and Eastern interpretations and the applicable practices of CSR, and that neither the promotion of commonly known good practices nor any mimetic isomorphism of CSR or Western sustainable practices would be able to address the complex nature of a developing nation like Vietnam.

8.3 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study can be found in the preliminary quantitative phase with concerns over single-source bias and weak predictors within Fry’s spiritual leadership model tested in the context of Vietnam. Though these limitations are addressed in the critical-realist-informed grounded-theory approach in the qualitative study, there are still limitations remaining in the qualitative phase. To have deep immersion in the transitional context of Vietnam and to examine the complex meaning of spirituality in shaping leadership practices, the researcher interviewed both leaders who were Buddhist and those who were spiritual but not Buddhist. Although this phase of the research does compare Buddhist and non-Buddhist leaders, there were inevitably significantly fewer non-Buddhist leader participants compared to Buddhist ones. There were challenges in identifying and recruiting leaders who are spiritual but not Buddhist. Though the

non-Buddhist leader respondents gave adequate in-depth explanations and interpretations to make comparisons to Buddhist-enacted leaders, more nuanced interpretations and expressions of inconsistencies in defining controversial terms like spirituality (Benefiel; 2005; Rozuel & McGhee; 2012) could have been better demonstrated with a more equivalent non-Buddhist leader sample.

Likewise, owing to limited access to some of the fieldwork, only a limited number of participant observations in some organizational events could be conducted, which clearly might have lessened the author's insights into important and concerning issues, such as the instrumentalisation and commodification of both Buddhist and leadership practices. Furthermore, the interviews and observations took place only in the main cities, namely Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City. This approach risks yielding limited distinctive provincial leadership characteristics and Buddhist practices compared with those that might have emerged from a wider scope of study.

Not all respondents in the qualitative phase agreed to participate in the quantitative one. Therefore, confidence in generalising results to all participating Buddhist leaders was limited. It is possible that those companies who refused to participate in the second (quantitative) phase of the study would have contributed significantly to the outcome of the spiritual leadership model from a Buddhist perspective.

Lastly, the study was conducted in a one-country context; it is therefore limited in its potential for generalisation. The results and conclusions from this study should be applied to spiritual leadership practices with caution and prudence, especially when 'spirituality' is interpreted distinctively in this study compared to previous research on spiritual leadership that was based on mono-method only (Ayranci & Semercioz, 2011; Bodia & Ali, 2012; Chen & Yang, 2012; Chen et al., 2012; Fry, Hannah, Noel & Walumbwa, 2011; Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Fry et al., 2017; Hunsaker, 2016; Javanmard, 2012). However, the proposed Buddhist leadership model can be generalised and used for a larger Buddhist practitioner population since respondents demonstrated their secular approach to Buddhist practices with non-discriminatory practice and language and appreciating the variety of Buddhist paths and practices. Having said that, the outer

layer of Buddhist characteristics of the model is context-specific in this study. Some leadership characteristics may be more effective than others, subject to the nature of the context where the research is conducted.

8.4 Conclusions and avenues for future research

The major outcomes of this study are the development and depiction of a Buddhist-enacted leadership model and a different research approach in developing spiritual leadership theory. However, further research is also proposed to develop a more widely generalisable Buddhist leadership model, in adopting Buddhist practices in organizational studies, and in developing spiritual leadership theory more generally.

Findings in this study suggest various research orientations to further develop a Buddhist leadership model. Buddhist-enacted leadership involves a process of self-transformation; therefore future longitudinal studies would benefit further from examining its impact on organizational outcomes, including leadership orientations to social responsibility and sustainable practices. As context plays a salient role in this study, it would be worthwhile to conduct a further comparative study of Buddhist leadership in different contexts to investigate how diverse contexts shape Buddhist leadership interpretations and practices. More significantly, longitudinal and comparative studies would provide more insight into contemporary concerns such as Buddhist leadership authenticity in enacting multiple-leadership identities in responding to contextual challenges. For instance, Thailand and Sri Lanka are considered to be primarily Buddhist nations; however, their belief systems are highly based on the Theravada Buddhist path rather than the more contemporary approach in Vietnam, which considers secular interpretations and applications of Buddhism in life. Thus a comparative study among these countries could further examine the mechanisms of context and differences in cultures in shaping the processual phenomena of Buddhist-enacted leadership.

A pragmatic approach to leadership, social responsibility practices and sustainability highlighted in this study is not without shortcomings, resulting in employees questioning their authenticity and reaffirming what Baker and Schaltegger (2015) suggest: ‘Pragmatic experimentation should not be based on just highlighting the successful, rather it should accept and understand failures or

deficiencies as further motivation to search for interesting new ideas and improvements' (p. 282). Further examination of social responsibility from a Buddhist perspective, especially the incorporation of the notion of 'depending arising' and karmic consequences, may provide interesting insights in developing relevant leadership practices such as responsible or ethical leadership. Additionally, further exploration of pragmatic approaches to CSR from a Buddhist perspective could contribute to the currently limited interdisciplinary studies incorporating spirituality and CSR in organizational studies. Such an exploration in Eastern contexts could also identify the causal mechanisms and powers of context in shaping divergent or context-sensitive CSR practices.

This study highlights potential topics in applying Buddhist principles and practices relevant in organizational studies that can be further explored. For instance, findings of this study beg for more exploration in the adaptation of mindfulness practices in organizations, especially in how mindfulness practices are different at individual and organizational levels. A broader conceptualization of mindfulness, instead of a limited interpretation of mindfulness as a moment-awareness practice, needs to be addressed, thus revisiting assessment or measurement of mindfulness in both organizational and leadership studies. In addition, further studies would benefit from examining the notion of non-attachment and mindfulness in organizations, especially in responding to concerns about the co-optation and instrumentalization of mindfulness practices. What happens, for example, when a mindful leader suffers from over-attachment to mindfulness practices? Exploring this research question could be of interest in the contemporary organizational context.

Furthermore, further research incorporating the Buddhist principle of non-attachment in organizational studies may respond to organizational issues relating to extremism, such as manipulation of workplace spirituality; leadership identity, narcissism and grandiosity; overemphasis on the static interpretation and pursuit of workplace meaningfulness; secular stress-reduction interpretations of corporate mindfulness practice; and placing excessive emphasis on personal and corporate pursuits and end results. In particular, the concept of 'self' in identity construction and the theory of attachment in leader-follower relationships are familiar in the Western literature. However, Buddhism embraces the concept of non-self and the notion of

non-attachment. A comparative study examining the differences in applying these philosophies in leadership may contribute to understanding the complex and diverse manifestations of leadership. It may also produce new insights in cross-cultural leadership and management studies. For instance, examining the notion of non-attachment in identity construction may provide a different perspective on concerns over phantasmic attachment in leadership-identity construction and attachment to leadership brand. Furthermore, incorporating the Buddhist notion of non-attachment may help researchers to examine the pros and cons and different levels of secure attachment in leader-follower relationships.

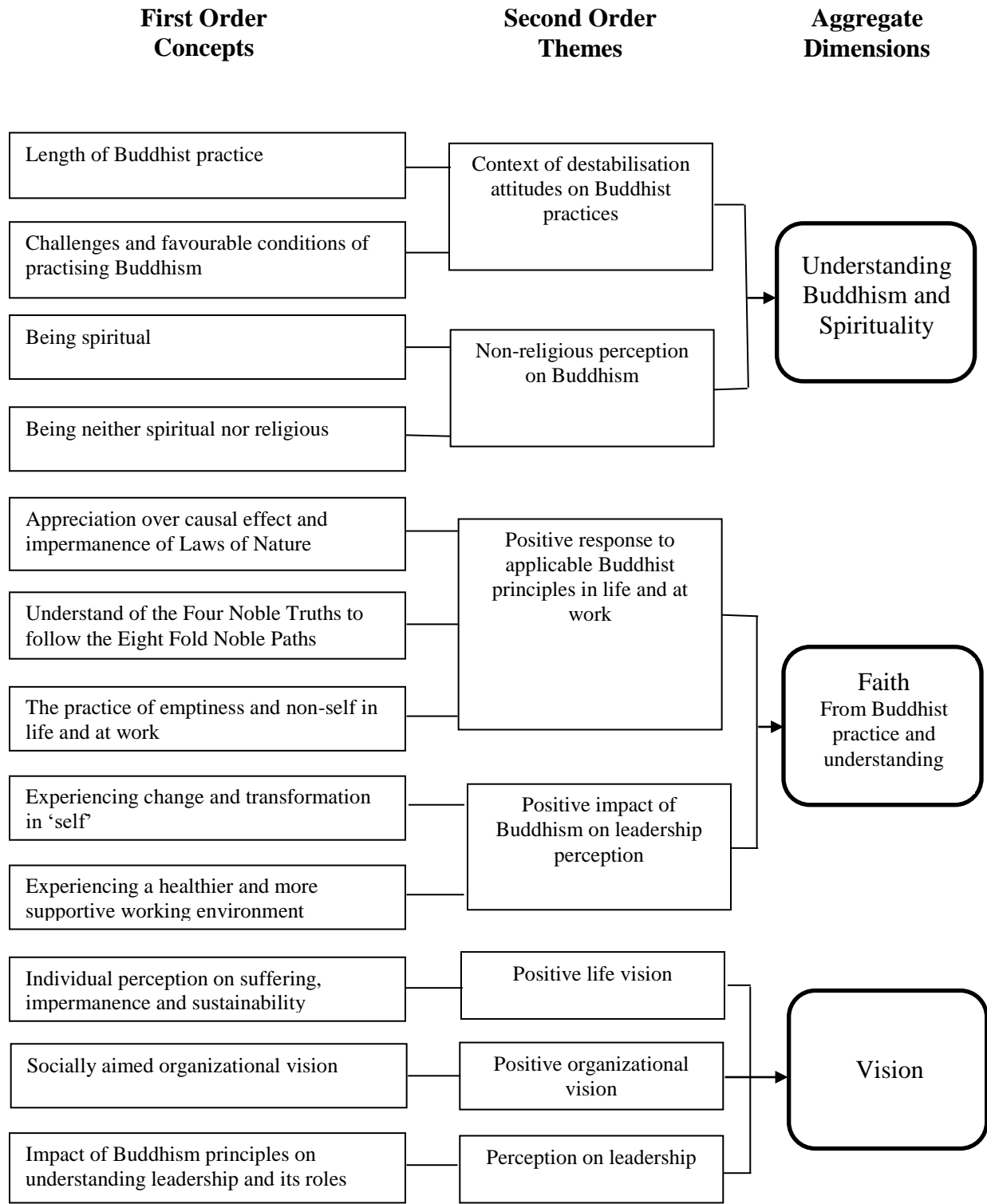
Ethnographic research may well be of help for exploring applications of Buddhism in complex organizational settings, especially those potentially revealing underlying assumptions and perceptions of organizational members and the motives behind corporate pursuits and approaches. Buddhist practices in organizations are various, context-specific and context-sensitive, and they involve personal and knowledge-based transformational processes that can most probably be captured and explained by in-depth comparative analysis using a longitudinal ethnographic methodology. This is ‘a method of life’ that highlights distinctive features of the phenomena by participant observations, establishing semantic relationships and identifying the use of any local and context-specific symbols or signs.

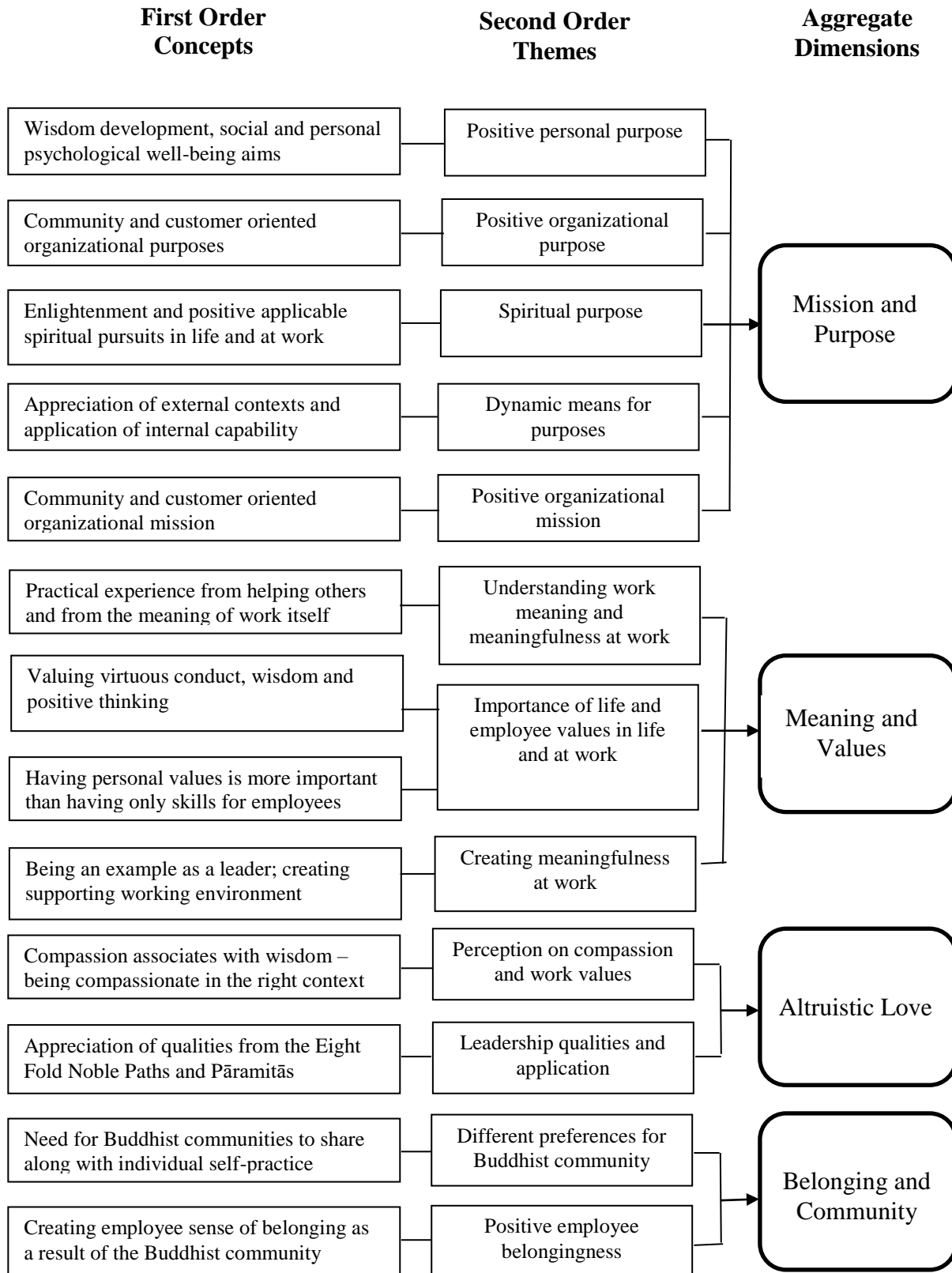
Context plays a salient role in this study as causal mechanisms and powers; therefore, further research is needed to validate the moderating role of context in the spiritual leadership model. For example, additional research examining the moderating effects of cultural and social factors in the relationship between spiritual leadership and outcome variables and transnational comparative research would be useful. Additionally, to further establish the validity of the spiritual leadership model, longitudinal studies across a variety of samples in different nations and cultures with different religious and spiritual backgrounds should be examined to test for changes in key variables over time. A broader range of stakeholder outcomes, such as corporate social responsibility, customer satisfaction, sustainability, financial outcomes and orientations, and psychological well-being (which can be influenced and affected by spiritual leadership practices), should also be investigated.

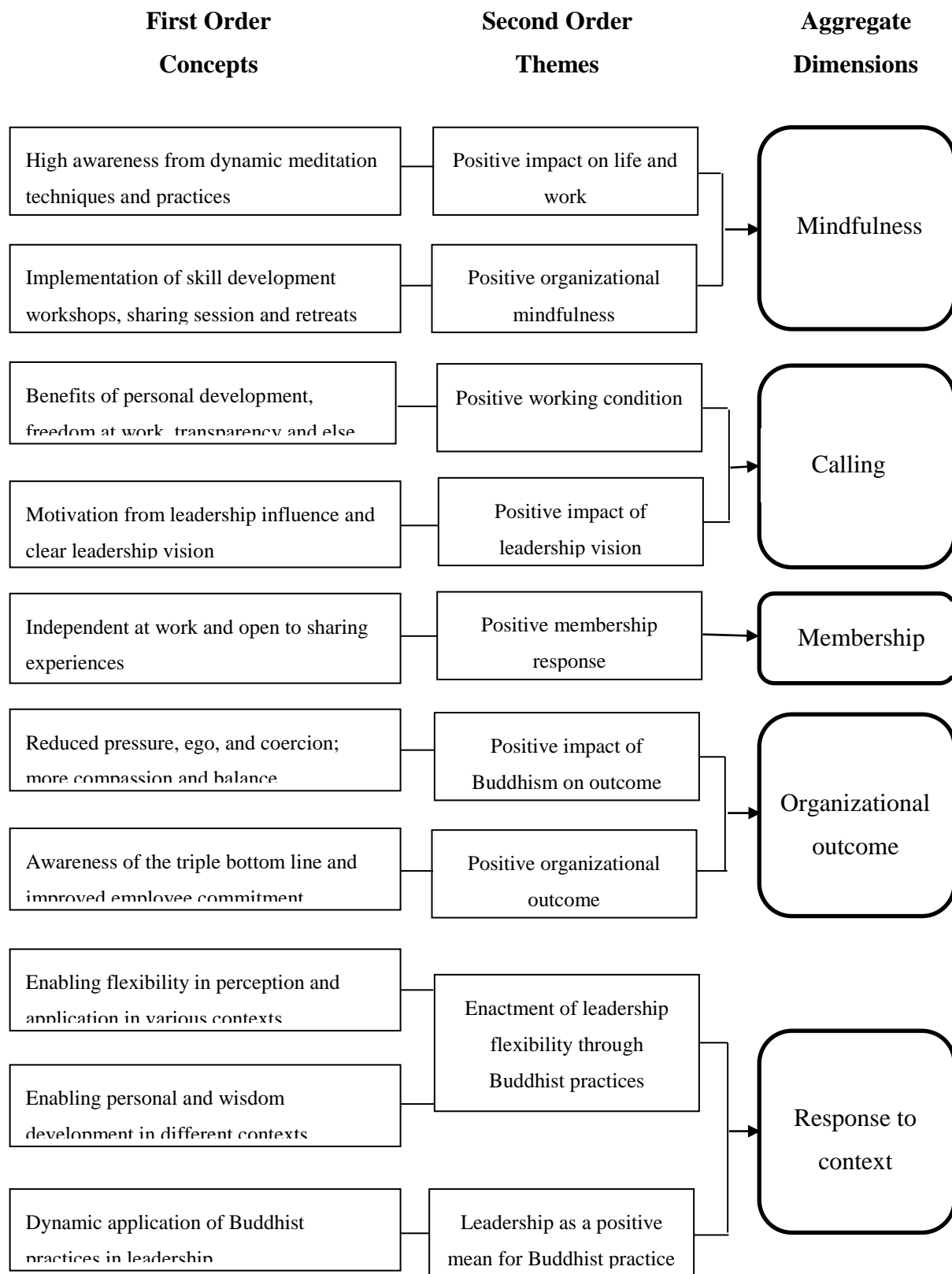
Rather than using solely a mono-method of testing spiritual leadership theory, this study, using a mixed-methods approach, especially with an emphasis on a critical-realist-informed grounded theory in the qualitative phase, was useful in exploring complex social and local factors moderating and affecting the enactment of Buddhism in spiritual leadership. Particularly, triangulation using different types of data from different sources has contributed greatly to the exploration and examination of the mechanism of contextual factors impacting the social process and shaping Buddhist-enacted spiritual leadership. Future research with the spiritual leadership model thus would benefit from both replication of this study's approach and development of both this approach and similar ones in different national and cultural contexts.

Appendices

Appendix A: Data Structure of Script A Interviews





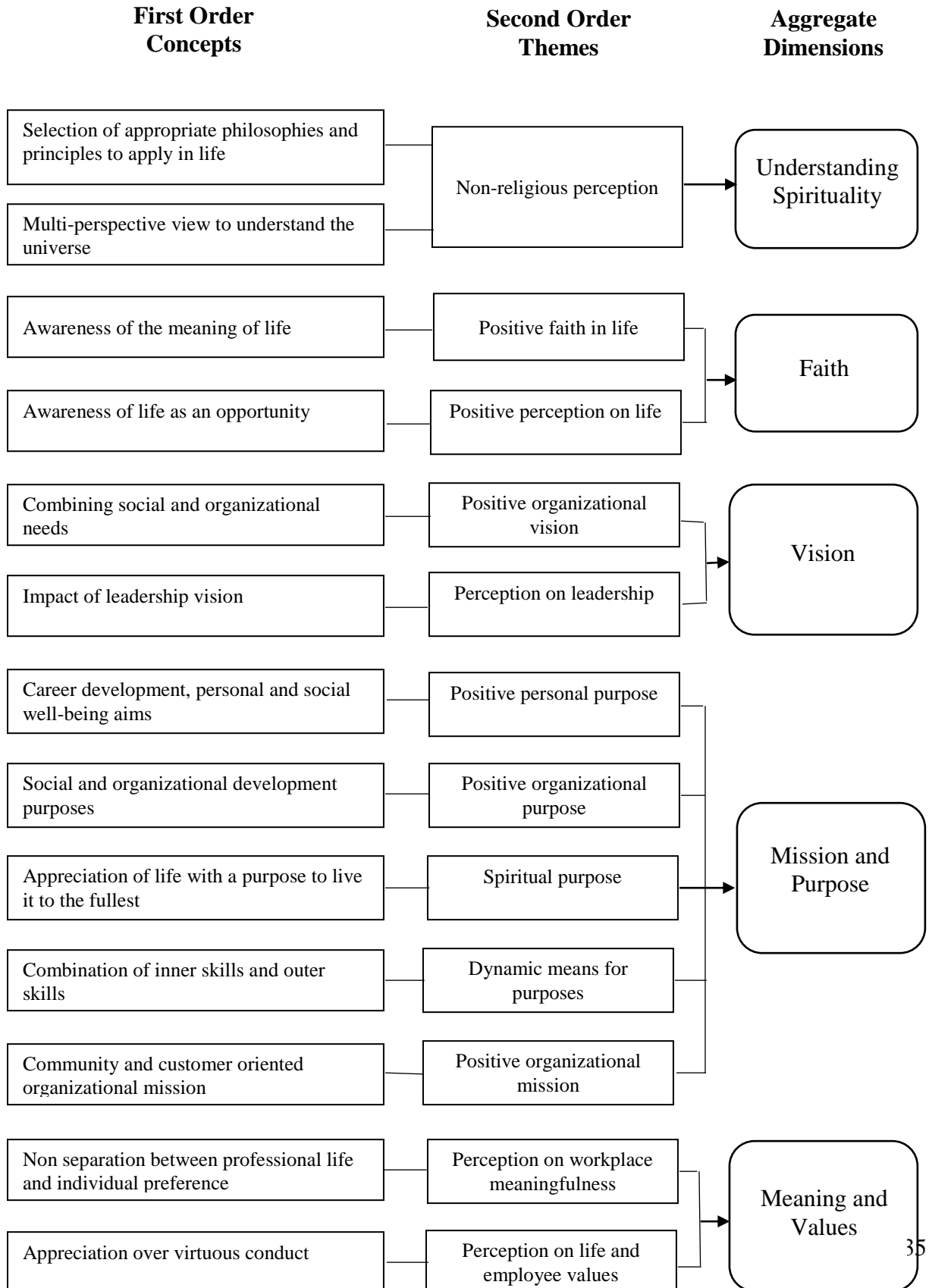


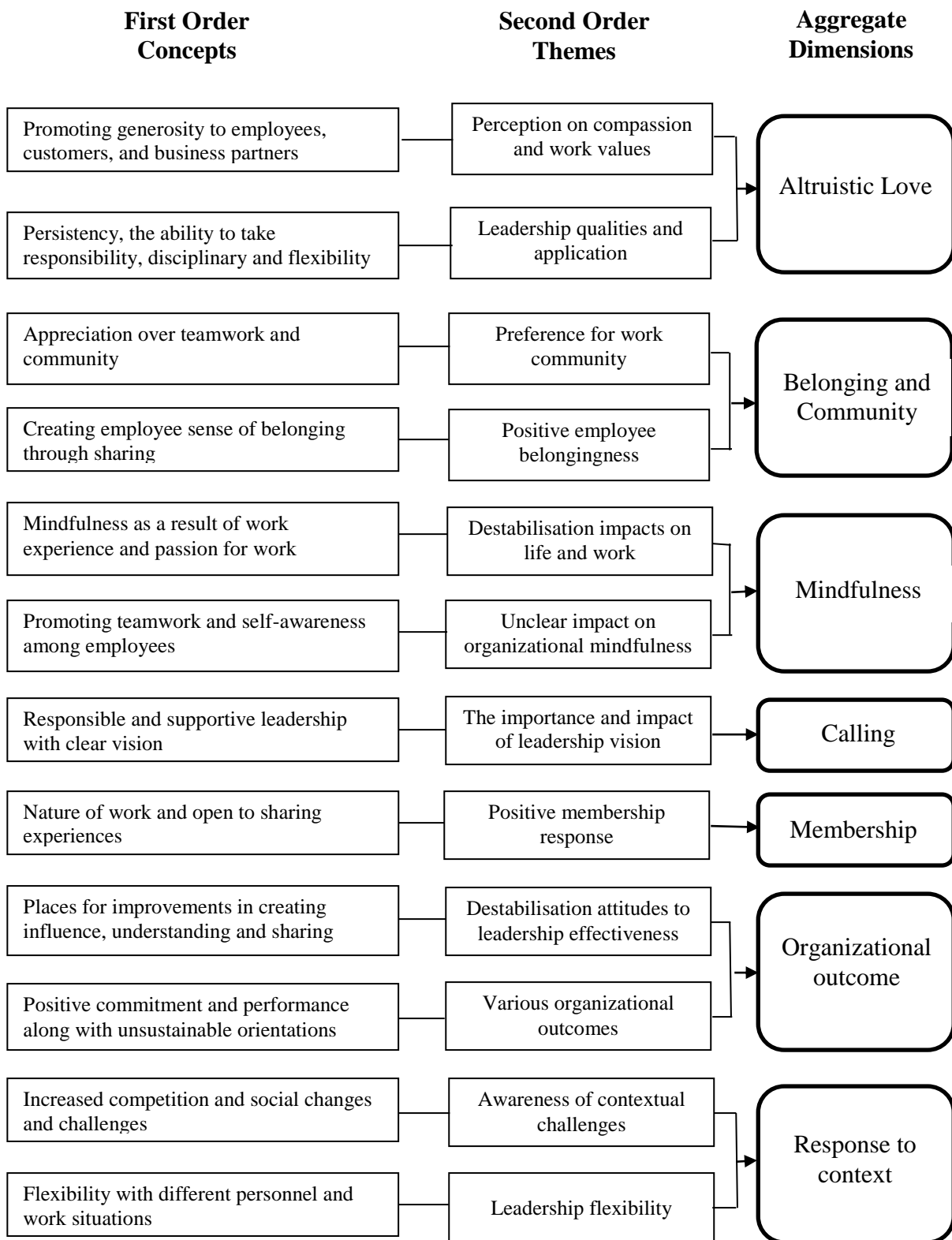
Appendix B: The Buddha Yoga Center principles

The Five Yamas (Giới) of Yoga Moral, ethical and societal guidelines for the practicing yogi	
Ahimsa (Không làm điều ác)	The practice of non-violence
Sathya (Không nói dối)	The practice of truthfulness – speaking and living the truth at all times
Brahmacharya (Tiết chế cảm xúc)	The practice of non-stealing or taking what is not freely given
Asteya (Không trộm cắp)	The practice of continence to control over physical impulses of excess
Aparigraha (Không tham đắm)	The practice of non-coveting to let go of unnecessary needs and desires
The Five Niyamas (Luật) of Yoga Yogi's internal environment of body, mind and spirit	
Saucha (Sự trong sạch)	The practice of purification – purifying both external environment and internal body
Samtosha (Biết bằng lòng)	The practice of contentment – not craving for the possessions of others or what not in possession
Tapas (Kỷ luật bản thân)	The practice of asceticism – intense self-discipline and attainment of will power to attain positive effect on life
Swadhyaya (Có tinh thần tự học hỏi)	The practice of self-study – the ability to see one's true divine nature through the contemplation of life lessons and meditation
Ishvara Pranidhana (Tuyệt đối tin tưởng vào tâm linh)	The practice of devotion – dedication, devotion and surrender to something greater than the self and selfless action

Source: The Buddha Yoga Centre Guideline

Appendix C: Data Structure of Script B interviews





Data Structure Part II

Appendix D: Script B representative findings demonstrating second-order themes and aggregate dimensions

Understanding spirituality
<i>Non-religious perception on spirituality</i> “I am spiritual. I follow philosophies and principles that are suitable for me.” (7B) “I don’t really think I am religious. I just follow what I believe and have faith in my actions.” (1B)
Faith
<i>Positive faith in life</i> – awareness of the meaning of life “I know the meaning of my life. There are two important days in life. The first day is the day that you were born and the day you come to realise the reason for your living. Many people live without having knowledge of their own life purposes. That is not a human way of living. I feel that I know my life purpose, my long-term and short-term goals. I feel that I am living.” (6B) <i>Positive perception on life</i> – awareness of life as an opportunity “I see life as an opportunity. We are lucky to be born in this life. The meaning of life lies in the ability to contribute to life and being able to show lovingkindness to people.” (4B)
Vision
<i>Positive life vision</i> <i>Balancing personal preference with social responsibility</i> “For me, life is living when you have passion and you have the opportunity to pursue your passion. However, your passion should not harm others, but bring benefit to them.” (1B) “I think that I have a certain goal in life. There should be balance between work and family. I pursue at career development, happiness in life, and spiritual belief.” (3B) <i>Understanding and appreciating the nature of life</i> “Life depends on our decisions. I need to have awareness to realise the true meaning of life.” (7B) “Life is beautiful to me. If you do not understand or appreciate life, whenever you are, you can hardly find your balance.” (6B) <i>Positive organizational vision</i> <i>Development oriented</i> “In five years’ time, we aim at becoming the largest hospitality franchise in Vietnam with international standard.” (2B) “To become the leading company in the region in oil business.” (5B) <i>Community oriented</i> “To help people to re-discover their inner self.” (7B)

“To improve and transform pre-school education in Vietnam.” (6B)

Perception on leadership

Ability to motivate and influence through vision

“Leadership is the ability to influence and guide others. It includes empowerment and inspiration.” (7B)

“Leadership is about having a good vision, being able to share and motivate employees.” (1B)

Ability to take responsibility for actions

“Leadership is about taking own responsibility not just for ourselves but for others.” (4B)

Mission and purpose

Positive personal purpose

Professional development – “My personal purpose is to develop my career.” (2B)

Personal well-being – “My personal purpose is to be happy in life and help others to be happy.” (4B)

Social well-being – “My personal purpose is to utilise my knowledge to build a better society and help SMEs with my experience.” (6B)

Positive organizational purpose

Organizational development purposes – “My company’s purpose is to gain profit and develop network that encourages Vietnamese people to use Vietnamese brands, thus, not losing customers to international hospitality brands.” (2B)

Social purposes – “I try to incorporate inner life values into business. Businessmen and women are very important; they have influence over thousands of employees.” (7B)

Spiritual purpose

Appreciation for life – “I think that we should be thankful in life, and to the people around us. We should not pay too much attention to rituals.” (5B)

Positive attitude for living life – “I want to live life to the fullest.” (4B)

Dynamic means for purposes

Need for skills – “To be able to solve problems, we need outer skills but to be able to have outer skills and do our tasks effectively, inner strength and inner competency are the sources.” (4B)

Positive organizational mission

“To deliver authentic leadership, one person at a time through mindfulness practices.” (4B)

“To improve quality of life by designing breakthrough solutions in technology in our products to maintain social well-being and sustainability.” (3B)

Meaning and values

Workplace meaningfulness

Personal preference and desire

“I really like what I do. It is part of my passion.” (1B)

“It is not that meaningful to me because our company still has a short-term focus.” (2B)

Balancing personal preference and social responsibility – “I love my work. I have a feeling that work is not something outside my life. I do not separate personal and professional purposes in life because I might lose balance and purpose.” (4B)

Professional development – “I like what I do. It is meaningful. When I deal with safety issues, I need to understand many things like physics, chemistry, and mathematics. If you want to understand safety and the causes of hazards, you have to understand its fundamental causes, especially physics, mathematics, and biology.” (5B)

Life and employee values

Virtuous conduct – “I think ethics is the most important aspect in either in life or at work. If we aim at only gaining individual benefit or advantage at work, it will not lead to sustainability.” (3B)

Lovingkindness – “I highly appreciate lovingkindness between people and people. It will be very meaningful if we can create that kind of spirit in life.” (1B)

Creating meaningful workplace

Company policies – “We have regular appraisals and warnings for unethical actions.” (2B)

Leading by example – “I live honestly and frankly as an example to my employees.” (4B)

Promoting meaningful cases – “If there is an ethical and well-behaved employee, we should promote his or her case to illustrated ethical behaviour. Sometimes we cannot even define ethics. I try to promote ethical cases to show employees examples and let them define ethical behaviour by themselves.” (6B)

Altruistic love

Perception on compassion and work values

Generosity – “I try to share and support my employees, even financially. Sometimes I share personal life experiences, especially which are relevant to their contexts.” (1B)

Based on knowledge and wisdom – “Compassion and love are parts of living life. You have to live it. You have to be rational to know what is good. Good purposes in a short-term might not be good enough in the long-term. That is just remedy [...] compassion needs to be applied in the right situation and with the right people.” (4B)

Leadership qualities

Forbearance – “I am very honest, frank, direct, and persistent in what I do. I guide others and inspire them for long-term goals.” (4B)

Discipline – “Discipline is very important. It is appropriate in the Vietnamese context. People tend to prefer their comfort zones and reluctant to comply with company policies.” (6B)

Generosity – “I create opportunities for employees to learn.” (7B)

Honesty – “Honesty is very important for me.” (5B)

Leadership application

Ability to take responsibility – “We normally have challenging tasks. If we are successful, we celebrate together; however, if we make mistakes or have failures, I normally take responsibility for that.” (1B)

Ability to be persistent in decision-making – “When I make a decision, I am very firm with my decision. I do not change my decision to create messy or unorganized situations for my employees.” (2B)

Ability to be flexible – “The incident caused by Famosa factory has impacted the areas of Quảng Bình and there have been no tourist activities there. We have two hotels there and we changed our policy in promoting our services. We do not promote our services for tourist anymore but for conference and business events.” (2B)

Being compassionate – “In business, we should listen to even contradictory views and opinions of employees. I am not afraid of having conflicting ideas. Actually, having conflicting opinions to criticise a situation effectively and appropriately is essential in developing business ideas.” (3B)

Being generous – “I normally do what I have already committed myself to. If I have to have a settlement in business, I try to avoid conflicts with partners even if it causes disadvantages for our business. The more difficulties we have, the more we become wiser in life. Next time, we will have our lessons from such experiences. That is how we improve ourselves in business.” (4B)

Ability to share and listen – “I am willing to share and to listen to employees about the things that I am not aware of without hesitations.” (5B)

Leading by example – “We need to be an example for employees. I need to show respect and peacefulness to others. Sometimes, I have shortcoming habits that cannot express such values. It can be a challenge because employees can pick up your bad habit.” (7B)

Belongingness and community

Preference for workplace community

“It is important because we are not perfect. If we have a group to share we can improve.” (2B)

“It is very important because we have different and diverse opinions among different groups aiming at different segments in the market. If we join as a group, we can support each other. For example, construction groups can join with other groups to find the best solution for business cases or projects. It is important to share information and knowledge among groups.” (3B)

“Every time I share something with others, I help myself as well. That is valuable for me. By sharing, I can gain insight and even have creative ideas that I was not aware of. I normally share with my assistants and update my vision with them.” (6B)

Positive employee sense of belonging

“I think they feel a sense of belonging and understand me more.” (5B)

Personal responsibility for sense of belonging – I do not think that I have responsibility with others. They are responsible for their own choices and feelings. I often tell them to make decisions based on their preferences, not because of having to please me or merely because of financial purposes. I try not to let them get emotionally attached to me to make their own choices. I try to find the causes behind their choices as well.” (4B)

Mindfulness

Destabilization impact on life and work

“Mindfulness affects my relationships at work. Sometimes if I am too passionate about my work, it creates stress to employees. They do provide me feedback on this matter.” (1B)

“Yes, I think mindfulness has impact. For example, if I am result oriented and focused too much on work, I might lose my opportunities to get to know my employees better.” (3B)

“Practising mindfulness depends on my experience and my preference at the work.” (2B)

Unclear impact on organizational mindfulness

“Every group has long-term and short-term goals. We try to stick with those goals and revise them on a weekly basis and mindfulness has no specific role in this.” (3B)

“Mindfulness depends on employees. I do not want to change other people. I am aware of what I do, but I do not insist on others. Self-awareness is important and it is good if employees can realise it by themselves.” (4B)

Calling

Importance and impact of leadership vision

Importance of leadership vision – “My vision is very important to employees. They cannot work without purpose and direction. I give them personal goals to achieve to develop themselves.” (2B)

Changes in employee perception – “Employees have changed their perception towards work. They are being more and more honest in promoting the quality of our products for customers. Now they see how we work in the company and they respect the value we bring into business.” (1B)

Supportive leadership – “I share my vision frequently with employees. I also create favourable and close relationships with employees so that they feel comfortable sharing with me their expectations. Our top-down and bottom-up relationships are met at a favourable point.” (3B)

Responsible leadership – “I am very persistent and I dare to take responsibility even for my followers.” (5B)

Membership response

Positive membership response

Open to sharing – “Employees response are positive. They do not experience pressure and have become more cooperative. I allow them to express their own ideas first; I listen to them rather than being coercive in insisting on my decisions.” (3B)

Preference to the nature of work – “For example, there is an employee who is very talented but he changes jobs consistently within six months or so. However, since he joined our company, it has been two years now. He revealed that the reason he stayed is because he likes the way we choose our products and respect the community.” (1B)

Organizational outcome

Destabilised attitudes to leadership effectiveness

“I still cannot influence everybody.” (4B)

“It is effective but I’m not that good in sharing and understanding.” (1B)

“Sometimes it is not that effective, especially in the Vietnamese context. I feel that if I am a pioneer in doing things that is not evident yet in our industry, therefore my initiatives sometimes do not receive the attention they should have. Others may follow eventually.” (5B)

Various organizational commitment

“Commitment depends on passion. There are employees who are passionate about what they do.” (7B)

“There is a combination of different commitments. They need to be secure financially to be able to appreciate other values such as a friendly working environment in the company. There is no coercion,

they are open and welcome to share their opinions.” (3B)

“My assistant is committed for 3 years, if he quits in the first year, he will have to compensate back 18 months of salary. Leaving at the second year the compensation will be 12 months, and leaving in the last year, the compensation is ten-month salary. At the same time, I play a major role in helping them to realise their career path.” (6B)

Positive performance and productivity

“We have 30–40% of increase.” (3B)

“I think our performance is very productive at the moment.” (6B)

Destabilised attitudes to corporate social responsibility

“I don’t think that I have responsibility to the society; I care about what good things I can do to the society.” (7B)

“We have concerns but not specific programmes.” (2B)

“Our product does not harm the environment. We have green oil energy, we are aware of fire safety solutions. We transfer oil to big trucks and we have solutions to collect back the gas and oil emissions from such transfer. With employees, who have direct connection with gas and oil, I try to explain to them the importance of safety costumes that they need to wear. I do not fine people who do not follow safety protocols but rather try to explain to them so they will follow it with their own will. Cautiousness is always useful before incidents happen otherwise, it may be too late.” (5B)

“I work in education and I aim at social well-being.” (4B)

Destabilised employee well-being

“Employee well-being depends on different departments. Some employees care a lot about financial needs. There are some departments where employees are not satisfied completely.” (1B)

“Employees are not really satisfied because of many reasons such as their lack of capability is in their career development phases. Sometimes they are not satisfied with themselves even though they are making good progress in developing their career.” (6B)

Positive sustainability

“We can maintain social sustainability. However, financial sustainability depends on external factors like policy changes within the industry. We are a distributor company so we do not have much environmental sustainability.” (1B)

“I am sustainable in the way I do things. I have a career path and short courses to help employees to improve. If they can complete my career path in eight years, they will be very competitive in the job market.” (6B)

Destabilised employee satisfaction

“Employee satisfaction depends on different departments.” (1B)

“I think our employees are mostly satisfied.” (3B)

“Employees are not that satisfied because of our short-term orientations.” (2B)

Leadership response to context

Awareness of contextual challenges

“Leadership is challenging. We need to be firm and flexible at the same time.” (2B)

“I think leadership is always challenging. Competition is everywhere so if we do not make effort in our leadership, we can easily be affected by external challenges.” (5B)

Leadership flexibility

Flexible with different employees – “I work with a mixture of different people from different regions. For example, when I work with a person in Ho Chi Minh city, she is very independent, so I just show her directions and guidance but nothing in specific or detailed. With other employees who are younger, I will need to work and guide them in details. Those are the typical characteristics of being flexible.” (1B)

Non-coercive leadership – “Leadership used to be bossy. That is not the case in today’s context.” (2B)

Flexible in time management – “I’m flexible in terms of time and management. They can choose what to do, however, I follow up with employees’ tasks and try to find out the rationale behind any incidents if any to prevent future failures.” (4B)

Contextual flexibility – “I am flexible. There might be many causes to a situation. I always listen to peoples’ opinions. When I go to the gas and oil stations, if I see employees who do not follow safety protocol, I will try to find out whether they are aware of the unsafeness of their tasks. If they are, I will make official claim for their working behaviour. However, if they are not aware because of their lack of understanding, I will try to explain to them so that they can be aware of their safety at the workplace.” (5B)

Appendix E: Comparisons of Script A and Script B responses to main aggregate dimensions of findings

Script A	Script B
Understanding spirituality	
<i>Non-religious perception on Buddhism</i>	<i>Non-religious perception on spirituality</i>
Faith	
<i>Positive response to the application of Buddhist principles in life, work and leadership</i> Laws of nature: causal effect, impermanence, interdependence The Four Noble Truths & The Noble Eightfold Path: sources of suffering, the Middle Way, Sila-Samadhi-Prajna, Truthfulness–Compassion–Forbearance Non-self and emptiness <i>Positive impact of Buddhism on leadership perception</i> Self-transformation Supportive working environment	<i>Positive faith in life</i> – awareness of the meaning of life <i>Positive perception of life</i> – awareness of life as an opportunity
Vision	
<i>Positive life vision</i> Understanding suffering Positive vision: a context for personal development; ‘beautiful’ and ‘interesting’; providing supportive environment for contextual flexibility; sustainable based on laws of nature <i>Positive organizational vision</i> Social values Sustainable development <i>Perception on leadership</i> Developing people through guidance and knowledge transfer Adopting personal and positional power, hard and soft skills in a non-coercive way Managing desires and temptations through vision Leading equally and by example	<i>Positive life vision</i> Balancing personal preference with social responsibility Understanding and appreciating the nature of life <i>Positive organizational vision</i> Organizational development oriented Community oriented <i>Perception on leadership</i> Ability to motivate and influence through vision Ability to take responsibility for actions
Mission and purpose	
<i>Positive personal purpose</i> Supporting the community Pursuing happiness Developing wisdom <i>Positive organizational purpose</i> Supporting the community Sustainability People development	<i>Positive personal purpose</i> Professional development Personal well-being Social well-being <i>Positive organizational purpose</i> Organizational development purposes Social purposes <i>Spiritual purposes</i>

<i>Spiritual purpose</i> Peace and freedom Enlightenment Wisdom development Ability to help others Sharing Buddhist practices <i>Dynamic means for purposes</i> External context: community and context Internal capability: leading by example, forbearance, emotional intelligence, compassion Other means: financial capability, information, spiritual faith <i>Positive organizational mission</i> Serve the community Customer satisfaction Financial gains	Appreciation for life Positive attitude for living life <i>Dynamic means for purposes</i> Need for skills: inner and outer skills <i>Positive organizational mission</i> Serve the community Financial gains Customer satisfaction
Meaning and values	
<i>Workplace meaningfulness</i> Experience from practising Buddhism Ability to help others Joy and happiness <i>Life and employee values</i> Life values: spiritual values, virtuous conduct, freedom and peace, wisdom Employee values: personal values and skills <i>Creating workplace meaningfulness</i> Freedom at work In-house training Sharing sessions Belongingness Personal development path	<i>Workplace meaningfulness</i> Personal preference and desire Balancing personal preference and social responsibility Professional development <i>Life and employee values</i> Virtuous conduct Lovingkindness <i>Creating meaningful workplace</i> Company policies Leading by example Promoting meaningful cases
Altruistic love	
<i>Perception on compassion and work values</i> Based on wisdom and context Based on virtuous conduct Based on non-self <i>Leadership qualities</i> Four Subline Attitudes and Wisdom: Compassion, Joy, Equanimity, Lovingkindness, Wisdom The Middle Way: Equality and fairness Tolerance and transparency Sacrifice – Patience – Forbearance <i>Leadership application</i> Compassion: Context specific; Specific, transparent and clear leadership based on Sila-Samadhi-Prajna; Balance between profit and sustainability; Non-coercive leadership Expressing generosity through knowledge sharing	<i>Perception on compassion and work values</i> Generosity Based on knowledge and wisdom <i>Leadership qualities</i> Forbearance Disciplinary Generosity Honesty <i>Leadership application</i> Ability to take responsibility Ability to be persistent in decision making Ability to be flexible Being compassionate Being generous Ability to share and listen Leading by example

Self-management Flexible leadership with non-attachment	
Belongingness and community	
<i>Different preferences for Buddhist community</i> The importance of Buddhist community Buddhism as a self-practice <i>Positive employee belongingness</i>	<i>Preference for work community</i> <i>Positive employee sense of belonging</i> Personal responsibility for sense of belonging
Mindfulness	
<i>Various specific mindfulness practice</i> <i>Positive impact on life and work</i> <i>Positive organizational mindfulness</i>	<i>No specific mindfulness practice</i> <i>Destabilization impact on life and work</i> <i>Unclear impact on organizational mindfulness</i>
Calling	
<i>Positive impact of leadership vision</i> <i>Positive working condition</i> People development Freedom at work Changes in work attitudes Transparency	<i>Positive impact of leadership vision</i> Changes in employee perception Supportive leadership Responsible leadership
Membership response	
<i>Positive membership response</i> Based on trust, independency and freedom at work Based on leadership vision <i>Challenges at first to adapt to changes</i>	<i>Positive membership response</i> Open to sharing Preference to the nature of work <i>Challenges at the beginning</i>
Organizational outcome	
<i>Positive impact of Buddhist enacted leadership</i> Emotional intelligence ; Compassion ; Non-attachment ; Non-coercion ; Collaborative environment ; Positive thinking <i>Improved organizational commitment</i> <i>Improved performance and productivity</i> <i>Increased corporate social responsibility</i> <i>Employee physical and psychological well-being</i> <i>Enhanced organizational sustainability</i> <i>Improved employee satisfaction</i>	<i>Destabilised attitudes to leadership effectiveness</i> <i>Various organizational commitment</i> <i>Positive performance and productivity</i> <i>Destabilised attitudes to corporate social responsibility</i> <i>Destabilised employee well-being</i> <i>Positive sustainability</i> <i>Destabilised employee satisfaction</i>
Leadership response to context	
<i>Leadership flexibility</i> Compassion based on wisdom Context Managing emotions Managing desires <i>Leadership as a mean to practise Buddhism</i>	<i>Awareness of contextual challenges</i> <i>Leadership flexibility</i> Flexible with different employees Non-coercive leadership Flexible in time management Contextual flexibility

Appendix F: Script A and Script B Interview Questions

Script A Interview Questions

1. How long have you been working in the company? What positions have you taken up so far?
2. Are you religious, spiritual, both or neither? What do you mean by religious, spiritual, both, or neither?
3. Are you following any particular religion tradition? If yes, which one is it and are you a practitioner?

For Buddhist practitioners continue with the questions, for non-Buddhist practitioners, use Interview Script B

4. How long have you been practising Buddhism in your personal life and at work? How easy or difficult do you find practising Buddhism in contemporary context?
 5. Based on which Buddhist principles or path are you practising?
 6. What are the Buddhist principles that you consider important and apply the most in your everyday life? How do you apply and translate them into your behaviour and actions in life?
 7. To what extent can you say practising Buddhism as a leader is important to yourself and your company?
 8. What do you consider 'suffering' in life and at work?
 9. What is your vision in life? What is your company's vision?
 10. How sustainable do you feel your vision is in terms of durability?
 11. What kind of sustainability do you consider important to your company?
 12. How do you understand leadership? How do you see your role as a leader?
 13. To what extent has Buddhism influenced your leadership vision and practices?
 14. What are your personal / organizational / spiritual purposes? What means do you need to pursue such purposes? Please specify with examples.
 15. What is your company's mission?
 16. How much do you like what you are doing? In what ways can you say your work is meaningful?
 17. What values do you consider most important in life? What are the guiding principles do you consider important for your employees' behaviour and for your company? What values and orientation do you practise in your leadership?
 18. How important is it for you to have a Buddhist community to share your practices? To what extent do you feel that you have a sense of belonging in such community?
 19. To what extent can you say your employees have a sense of belonging as a result of your Buddhist practices and leadership?
 20. What Buddhist qualities do you apply in leadership practices? 21. How and through which leadership practices do you apply them?
 22. Which one do you think is the most practical and effective in contemporary context? And why?
 23. Can you give a specific example to illustrate your application of such qualities in your leadership style?
 24. What is your opinion on compassion in general and compassion in business?
- If the interviewee considers compassion important, ask question 25, otherwise go to question 26*
25. How compassionate are you in your role as a leader to your employees and your customers?
 26. To what extent do you believe that people need or want to feel that their work is valued or worthwhile?

27. How important is your leadership vision to your company and employees? Why?
 28. What differences can you bring with such vision and leadership practices?
 29. How have your employees received and responded to your vision and leadership practices? Please give some specific examples.
 30. To what extent can you say you are mindful in your life and at work?
 31. How do you practise mindfulness? Based on which Buddhist principles are you practising?
 32. How has mindfulness affected your relationship and outcome at work? Do you promote mindfulness activities to your employees? What do you expect from such activities, if any?
 33. How well do you think you have applied Buddhist principles in leadership? Has it been effective? How?
 34. How can you evaluate the outcomes of your application of Buddhist practices into leadership in the following aspects (if possible, please indicate the levels of effectiveness and provide examples to illustrate)?
 - Organizational commitment
 - Performance and Productivity
 - Corporate social responsibility
 - Employee physical and psychological well being
 - Sustainability / durability / lasting (financial/environmental/well-being)
 - Life and job satisfaction
 35. How flexible are you with your leadership practices in different context? Please provide examples.
 36. To what extent do you consider your leadership as skillful means? Why?
 37. What is the major difference have you experienced in practising Buddhism along with your leadership compared to traditional leadership styles? Please specify with examples.
 38. What expected outcomes do you have from your leadership?
 39. What else do you wish you can do more in practice in the future?
- This is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your time and participation.*

Script B Interview Questions

1. What is your hope in life and at work? To what extent can you say it is important to yourself and your company?
2. What is your vision in life? What is your company's vision?
3. How sustainable do you feel your vision is in terms of durability?
4. What kind of sustainability do you consider important to your company?
5. How do you understand leadership? How do you see your role as a leader?
6. To what extent such vision(s) have impact on your leadership style?
7. What do you feel motivates you most at work?
8. What are your personal, organizational and spiritual purposes? What means do you need to pursue such purposes? Please specify with examples.
9. What is the mission of your company?
10. How much do you like what you are doing? In what ways can you say your work is meaningful?
11. Which values do you consider most important in life? What are the guiding principles do you consider important for your employees' behaviour and for your company? What values and orientation do you practise in your leadership?

12. How important is it for you to have a community to share your practices? To what extent do you feel that you have a sense of belonging in such community?
 13. To what extent can you say your employees have a sense of belonging as a result of your leadership practices?
 14. What qualities do you apply in leadership practices?
 15. How and through which leadership practices do you apply them?
 16. Which one do you think is the most practical and effective in contemporary context? And why?
 17. Can you give a specific example to illustrate your application of such qualities in your leadership style?
 18. What is your opinion on compassion in general and compassion in business?
 - If the interviewee considers compassion important, ask question 19, otherwise go to question 20*
 19. How compassionate are you in leadership and how compassionate is your company?
 20. To what extent do you believe that people need or want to feel that their work is valued or worthwhile?
 21. How important is your leadership vision to your company and employees? Why?
 22. What differences can you bring with such vision and leadership practices?
 23. How have your employees received and responded to your vision and leadership practices? Please give some specific examples.
 24. To what extent can you say you are mindful in your life and at work?
 25. How do you practise mindfulness? What do you need to achieve the state of mindfulness?
 26. How has mindfulness affected your relationship and outcome at work? Do you promote mindfulness activities to your employees? What do you expect from such activities, if any?
 27. How effective do you think your leadership is?
 28. How can you evaluate the outcomes of your leadership in the following aspects (if possible, please indicate the levels of effectiveness and provide examples to illustrate)?
 - Organizational commitment
 - Performance and Productivity
 - Corporate social responsibility
 - Employee physical and psychological well being
 - Sustainability / durability / lasting (financial/environmental/well-being)
 - Life and job satisfaction
 29. To what extent do you find it challenging to practise leadership in today's context? Why or why not?
 30. How flexible are you with your leadership practices in different context? Please provide examples.
 31. What is the major difference have you experienced in practising contemporary leadership compared to traditional leadership styles? Please specify with examples.
 32. What expected outcomes do you have from your leadership?
 33. What else do you wish you can do more in practice in the future?
- This is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your time and participation.*

Appendix F: SLT Survey and Survey Keys

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Please take the time to fill out this survey. It is not necessary for you to write or sign your name on the form. This survey is anonymous and names will not be recorded. We ask that you answer all the questions as accurately as you can. Thank you.

DEMOGRAPHICS GO HERE

Please name your

company_____

Please state the industry of your

company_____

Please name your position at your

company_____

Please name the position you report

to_____

What is your age: 18-24 ____ 25-34: ____ 35-44: ____ 45-54: ____ 55-64: ____ 65+ ____

Sex (Female/Male): _____

Vision – describes the organization’s journey and why we are taking it; defines who we are and what we do.

1. (Q18) I understand and am committed to my organization’s vision.
2. (Q26) My organization has a vision statement that brings out the best in me.
3. (Q30) My organization’s vision inspires my best performance.
4. (Q28) My organization’s vision is clear and compelling to me.

Hope/Faith – the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction that the organization’s vision/ purpose/ mission will be fulfilled.

1. (Q8) I have faith in my organization and I am willing to “do whatever it takes” to ensure that it accomplishes its mission.
2. (Q16) I demonstrate my faith in my organization and its mission by doing everything I can to help us succeed.
3. (Q15) I persevere and exert extra effort to help my organization succeed because I have faith in what it stands for.
4. (Q36) I set challenging goals for my work because I have faith in my organization and want us to succeed.

Altruistic Love – a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others.

1. (Q1) The leaders in my organization “walk the walk” as well as “talk the talk”.
2. (Q10) The leaders in my organization are honest and without false pride.
3. (Q12) My organization is trustworthy and loyal to its employees.
4. (Q22) The leaders in my organization have the courage to stand up for their people.
5. (Q31) My organization is kind and considerate toward its workers, and when they are suffering, want to do something about it.

Meaning/Calling – a sense that one’s life has meaning and makes a difference.

1. (Q2) The work I do makes a difference in people's lives.
2. (Q14) The work I do is meaningful to me.
3. (Q17) The work I do is very important to me.
4. (Q23) My job activities are personally meaningful to me.

Membership – a sense that one is understood and appreciated.

1. (Q3) I feel my organization appreciates me, and my work.
2. (Q9) I feel my organization demonstrates respect for me, and my work.
3. (Q21) I feel I am valued as a person in my job.
4. (Q32) I feel highly regarded by my leaders.

Inner Life – the extent to which one has a mindful practice or seeks mindful awareness.

1. (Q5) I tend not to notice feelings of tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
2. (Q13) I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.
3. (Q25) I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
4. (Q34) I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
5. (Q38) I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later.
6. (Q41) I find myself doing things without paying attention.
7. (Q42) I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.

Organizational Commitment – the degree of loyalty or attachment to the organization.

1. (Q4) I feel like "part of the family" in this organization.
2. (Q7) I really feel as if my organization's problems are my own.
3. (Q11) I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
4. (Q37) I talk up this organization to my friends as a great place to work for.
5. (Q39) I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

Productivity – efficiency in producing results, benefits, or profits.

1. (Q19) In my department, everyone gives his/her best efforts.
2. (Q20) In my department, work quality is a high priority for all workers.
3. (Q29) My work group is very productive.
4. (Q33) My work group is very efficient in getting maximum output from the resources (money, people, equipment, etc.) we have available.

Satisfaction with Life – one's sense of subjective well-being or satisfaction with life as a whole.

1. (Q6) The conditions of my life are excellent.
2. (Q24) I am satisfied with my life.
3. (Q27) In most ways my life is ideal.
4. (Q35) If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
5. (Q40) So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

Please answer the following questions concerning yourself, the people you work with and your organization using these responses:

**1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral) 4=Agree
5= Strongly Agree**

1. The leaders in my organization “walk the walk” as well as “talk the talk.”
2. The work I do makes a difference in people’s lives.
3. I feel my organization appreciates me and my work.
4. I feel like “part of the family” in this organization.
5. I tend not to notice feelings of tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
6. The conditions of my life are excellent.
7. I really feel as if my organization’s problems are my own.
8. I have faith in my organization and I am willing to “do whatever it takes” to ensure that it accomplishes its mission.
9. I feel my organization demonstrates respect for me, and my work.
10. The leaders in my organization are honest and without false pride.
11. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
12. My organization is trustworthy and loyal to its employees.
13. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing.
14. The work I do is meaningful to me.
15. I persevere and exert extra effort to help my organization succeed because I have faith in what it stands for.
16. I demonstrate my faith in my organization and its mission by doing everything I can do help us succeed.
17. The work I do is very important to me.
18. I understand and am committed to my organization’s vision.
19. In my department, everyone gives his/her best efforts.
20. In my department, work quality is a high priority for all workers.
21. I feel I am valued as a person in my job.
22. The leaders in my organization have the courage to stand up for their people
23. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.
24. I am satisfied with my life.
25. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time
26. My organization has a vision statement that brings out the best in me.
27. In most ways my life is ideal.
28. My organization’s vision is clear and compelling to me.
29. My work group is very productive.
30. My organization’s vision inspires my best performance.
31. My organization is kind and considerate toward its workers, and when they are suffering, wants to do something about it.
32. I feel highly regarded by my leaders.
33. My work group is very efficient in getting maximum output from the resources (money, people, equipment, etc.) we have available.
34. I find it difficult to stay focused on what’s happening in the present.
35. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
36. I set challenging goals for my work because I have faith in my organization and want us to succeed.
37. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great place to work for.

38. I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later.
39. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.
40. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
41. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
42. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.

Spiritual Leadership Questionnaire Items by Scale

Please answer the following questions concerning the people you work with using these responses:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree 4=Agree 5= Strongly Agree

1. The leaders in my organization "walk the walk" as well as "talk the talk."
AL1
2. The work I do makes difference in people's lives.
MC1
3. I feel my organization appreciates my work, and me.
MEM1
4. I feel like "part of the family" in this organization.
OC1
5. I tend not to notice feelings of tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
IL1
6. The conditions of my life are excellent.
SL1
7. I really feel as if my organization's problems are my own.
OC2
8. I have faith in my organization and I am willing to "do whatever it takes" to ensure that it accomplishes its mission.
HF1
9. I feel my organization demonstrates respect for me, and my work.
MEM2
10. The leaders in my organization are honest and without false pride.
AL2
11. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
OC3
12. My organization is trustworthy and loyal to its employees.
AL3
13. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.
IL2
14. The work I do is meaningful to me.
MC2
15. I persevere and exert extra effort to help my organization succeed because I have faith in what it stands for.
HF2
16. I demonstrate my faith in my organization and its mission by doing everything I can do help us succeed.
HF3

17. The work I do is very important to me.
MC3
18. I understand and am committed to my organization's vision.
VIS1
19. In my department, everyone gives his/her best efforts.
PRO1
20. In my department, work quality is a high priority for all workers.
PRO2
21. I feel I am valued as a person in my job.
MEM3
22. The leaders in my organization have the courage to stand up for their people.
AL4
23. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.
MC4
24. I am satisfied with my life.
SL2
25. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
IL3
26. My organization has a vision statement that brings out the best in me.
VIS2
27. In most ways my life is ideal.
SL3
28. My organization's vision is clear and compelling to me.
VIS3
29. My work group is very productive
PRO3
30. My organization's vision inspires my best performance.
VIS4
31. My organization is kind and considerate toward its workers, and when they are suffering, wants to do something about it.
AL5
32. I feel highly regarded by my leaders.
MEM4
33. My work group is very efficient in getting maximum, output from the resources (money, people, equipment, etc.) we have available.
PRO4
34. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
IL4
35. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
SL4
36. I set challenging goals for my work because I have faith in my organization and want us to succeed.
HF4
37. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great place to work for.
OC4

38. I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later.

IL5

39. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

OC5

40. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

SL5

41. I find myself doing things without paying attention.

IL6

42. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.

IL7

Appendix G – Contextualized survey to examine Buddhist-enacted leadership characteristics

Please answer the following questions concerning yourself, your leader(s) and your organization using these responses and explain and give examples where possible:

1 = Not at all 2= To some extent 3 =To a moderate extent 4 =To a great extent 5 = To a very great extent

43. My leader is flexible in his/her leadership style. _____

Please explain and give examples where possible:

44. My leader displays the emotional intelligence and ability to manage emotions in different/challenging situations and contexts. _____

Please explain and give examples where possible:

45. My leader is compassionate. _____

Please explain and give examples where possible:

46. My leader is willing to compromise his/her needs for the well-being of employees. _____

Please explain and give examples where possible:

47. My organization practises social responsibility with regard to the environment, employee well-being, customers, clients, suppliers, the local community and society at large. _____

Please explain and give examples where possible:

48. My organization demonstrates sustainability in continuing innovation and success with a business model that responds to the needs and interests of all stakeholders. _____

Please explain and give examples where possible:

49. Name one or more things you like about your leader:

50. Name one or more things you like about your organization:

51. Name one or more things on which you would like to see improvements in your organization in the future:

Appendix H: Permission to use the SLT survey questions

5/1/2017

Re: Permission to use the Spiritual Leadership Survey questions

Re: Permission to use the Spiritual Leadership Survey questions

Fry Jody [lwfry@tamuct.edu]

Sent: 20 October 2016 23:51

To: VU, MAI C.

Attachments: SLTSurveyKeyRev7.docx (24 KB)

Mai,

You are more than welcome to use our SL survey in your research. I have recently revised the inner life scale. Please keep me informed of your progress and, in particular, what you find in regards to inner life as it relates to the SL model and other study variables.

All the best,

Louis W. (Jody) Fry, Ph.D.
Professor, Texas A&M University - Central Texas
1001 Leadership Way
Killeen, TX 76549
lwfry@tamuct.edu

From: VU, MAI C. <mai.c.vu@durham.ac.uk>

Sent: Thursday, October 13, 2016 9:01 AM

To: Fry Jody

Subject: Permission to use the Spiritual Leadership Survey questions

Dear Professor Fry,

My name is Mai Vu. I am currently a doctoral student at Durham Business School, Durham University, United Kingdom. My research title is Spiritual leadership - A Buddhist approach to CSR and sustainability. The aim of my research is to explore the application and influence of Buddhist principles in leadership practices and their impacts on CSR and organizational outcomes. My empirical data will be collected in Vietnam.

I would like to ask for your permission to reproduce and use your Spiritual Leadership Survey Instrument and the scoring key in my research. I will use your survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the survey only for my research study and will not sell or use it with compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include copyright statement on all copies of the instrument
- I will send my research study, copy of reports, articles that make use of these survey data promptly to your attention.

Should you require any more information, please do let me know.

Thank you.

I look forward to your reply.

Best wishes,
Mai

Appendix I: Consent Form for Interviews



CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE PROJECT:

.....

Have you read the Participant Information Sheet? YES / NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss the study? YES / NO

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions? YES / NO

Have you received enough information about the study and the Intended uses of, and access arrangements to, any data which you supply ? YES / NO

Were you given enough time to consider whether you want to participate? YES / NO

Who have you spoken to?

.....

Do you consent to participate in the study? YES / NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study: YES / NO

* at any time and

* without having to give a reason for withdrawing and

* without any adverse result of any kind?

Are you aware of and consent to the use of recorder during the interview? YES / NO

Signed Date (NAME
IN BLOCK LETTERS)

Appendix J: Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study: Spiritual leadership – A Buddhist approach to Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

My name is Mai Chi Vu and I am conducting this research as a student in the Doctoral Programme at Durham Business School, Durham, United Kingdom.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to explore and the application and influence of Buddhist principles in leadership and in Corporate Social Responsibility practices.

Why have I been approached?

You have been approached because the study requires information from upper managers who understand and practise Buddhist principles. Your insights and sharing would contribute to leadership practices in contemporary business environment.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part this interview. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without having to give any reasons.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. Participation in this study will involve approximately 60 minutes in total and is fully voluntary.

Will my data be Identifiable?

The information you provide is confidential. Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained. The research results and analyses of this project will safeguard your anonymity at all time. The data collected for this study will be stored securely and only the researchers conducting this study will have access to this data:

- Audio recordings and interview notes will be destroyed and/or deleted once the project has been submitted for publication/examined
- The files on the computer will be encrypted (that is no-one other than the researcher will be able to access them) and the computer itself password protected.
- The typed version of your interview will be made anonymous by removing any identifying information including your name. Anonymised direct quotations from your interview may be used in the reports or publications from the study, so your name will not be attached to them.

- All your personal data will be confidential and will be kept separately from your interview responses.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be summarised and reported in a thesis and may be submitted for publication in an academic or professional journal.

Are there any risks?

There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study. However, if you experience any distress following participation you are encouraged to inform the researcher and contact the resources provided at the end of this sheet.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

Although you may find participating interesting, there are no direct benefits in taking part. However, a summary of the findings will also be made available to all participants.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed by the to Durham University Business School's Sub-Committee for Ethics, and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Durham University.

Where can I obtain further information about the study if I need it?

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, or if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact the investigator, Mai Chi Vu, at +447514172576, Durham Business School, Mill Hill Lane, Durham DH1 3LB, UK, e-mail: mai.c.vu@durham.ac.uk. Alternatively, please contact Professor Roger Gill at Durham Business School, Mill Hill Lane, Durham DH1 3LB, UK, e-mail: r.w.t.gill@durham.ac.uk

Please keep a copy of this information sheet for your records.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix K: Example Codes of Script A

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
Buddhism & Spirituality	Length of Buddhist practice and religious and spiritual perceptions shapes Buddhist interpretation and practice	<p>a way and perception of life to lead people to a better way of living</p> <p>a direction for peace in mind and humanistic direction in medical practice to maintain virtuous conduct</p> <p>Buddhism for me is life philosophy</p> <p>religions guide people to do good things, spirituality is how we apply our mind in actions, and Buddhism is a way of living</p>	140
Faith	Buddhist principles positively affect perceptions on life, work and leadership practices	<p>I try to apply the five moral precepts of Buddhism with the Noble Eightfold Path in everyday life</p> <p>everything in life should be balanced</p> <p>in Buddhism there is no leadership but personal transformation</p> <p>leading yourself and leading your company</p>	75
Vision	Buddhist principles positively shapes personal, organizational, leadership and vision	<p>leadership in Buddhism means that you know how to live in hardship with employees. You think about employees and the community</p> <p>to create a supportive environment at the workplace in the sense that employees do enjoy their life at work to create balance in chaotic life</p> <p>happiness and suffering both exists, with the right attitude, there is neither</p>	149

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
Mission & Purpose	Buddhist principles affect personal, spiritual, organizational purposes and mission	<p>to help the community with good products to secure employees' needs and maintain the health of the community</p> <p>to promote the health for the community</p> <p>to enhance knowledge, wisdom</p> <p>to live happily and strongly</p>	88
Meaning & Values	Buddhist principles forms understanding and sense-making for values and meaningfulness at work	<p>be an example</p> <p>set up a specific and clear personal development path for employees so that they have direction and a destination for what they are doing</p> <p>work is like my encouragement in life learning</p> <p>work situations help me to reflect back upon myself and my ego to control it</p> <p>to help employees to be happy, I try to help them to find their passion and their work and try to allocate them to the right position that they can develop their passion</p>	66
Altruistic Love	Buddhist principles and perceptions on compassion generates leader's altruistic love and leadership styles	<p>need all four sublime attitudes in both work and life: maitri (lovingkindness), karunā (compassion). Mudita (joy) and upeksha (equanimity).</p> <p>Generosity, accepting differences and opinions and doing good for the community</p> <p>Buddhism teaches the ability to sacrifice, to be patient and to be hard working</p> <p>bringing wisdom to work</p>	126

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
		Anger or ego to confirm leadership identity or power in business creates a distance between the leader and employees	
Belonging	Variance on Buddhist practices leads to different preferences and acknowledgment for belongingness	If it is for myself it is not necessary because Buddhism is about personal practise, however, creating a sense of belonging and having a group is important if you want to help people helps people to share the same value and direction	55
Mindfulness	Dynamic mindfulness practices positively influence leader perception on corporate mindfulness	cannot apply it to all employees; can only apply it to upper management levels it is based on demand, not coercion should be based on context of the company work itself is active meditation	48
Calling	The enactment of freedom and transparency from Buddhist principles positively shape working conditions and leadership vision	to control my emotions and balance myself to have the opportunity to learn new knowledge and give right decisions when I am calm employees do things independently and they are self-motivated freedom at work and independency our mechanism is based on transparency	29
Membership	Buddhist principles appreciate and acknowledge membership	share with employees leadership is important, but employees are important as well non-self, compassion and non-attachment creates	22

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
		positive relationships	
Organizational Outcome	Buddhist principles generate positive personal development/transformation and social orientations	to be flexible with financial and social sustainability aimed at community and environmental sustainability do not have desires – it creates leadership attraction	141
Response to Context	Buddhist principles enable leadership flexibility and skilful means	everything was about me and my ego, which has led to greed, hatred and ignorance; now more sensitive and flexible to people around and the context leadership is a powerful means to master Buddhist practice I don't use Buddhism as a means in life; it is a life value, it is something we need in life to transform and develop wisdom in leadership is crucial to deal with workplace challenges	109
Σ			1,048

Appendix L: Example Codes of Script B

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
Spirituality	Length of working experience shapes viewpoint and philosophies of life rather than religious-based perceptions	follow philosophies and principles that are suitable wisdom and experience in life spiritual not religious	14
Faith	Awareness of opportunity and meaningfulness in life shapes positive perceptions of life and work	develop and have humanity in what we do and bring prosperity for all members of our company life as an opportunity I know my life purpose, long-term and short-term goals. I feel that I am living	6
Vision	Both organizational needs and social demands foster leadership and organizational vision	to establish a friendship and partnership among business women to help them to balance their life to improve and change the quality of pre-school education in Vietnam to bring the best and advanced products and services	40
Mission & Purpose	Personal development aims, social and organizational development purposes positively impact leader and organizational mission and purposes	to bring valuable healthcare services to customers develop network that encourages Vietnamese people to use Vietnamese brands, not losing customers to international hospitality brands to become the messenger in promoting Vietnamese culture to foreign tourists	38

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
		have faith and belief to do everything with a pure heart and mind in fairness without individual benefit or taking advantage individually	
Meaning & Values	Professional experience and preference shape meaningful approaches	appreciate lovingkindness between person and person responsibility and intellectual knowledge and experience to identify the validity of the products ethical attitude at the workplace love, appreciation, faith and having belief in everything	19
Altruistic Love	Persistency, discipline, flexibility and generosity shape leadership approaches to employees, customers and business partners	transparency through sharing and understanding take collective responsibility for team failures compassion both persistent and understanding honest, frank, direct, and persistent	40
Belongingness	Awareness of teamwork facilitates positive belongingness	if we have a group to share we can improve motivate and contribute to our knowledge and understanding	14
Mindfulness	Impacts of mindfulness vary in different professional contexts	affects my relationship at work creates stress for employees depends on my experience and my preference towards the work I like as well as vision from the company passionate about my work have skills to do so	27

Theme	Example Axial Codes	Example Open Codes	<i>f</i>
Calling	Supportive leadership vision generates positive calling	<p>vision affects the whole team in terms of motivation</p> <p>leadership should be able to sail the boat for sustainable development</p> <p>top-down and bottom-up relationships are met at a favourable common point</p>	22
Membership	Leader's altruistic love and the nature of work create positive membership	<p>do not have pressure and become more cooperative</p> <p>the reason he stayed because he likes the way we choose our products and respect the community</p>	4
Organizational Outcome	Leadership effectiveness varies due to different individual and organizational pursuits and purposes	<p>have been able to create community value</p> <p>still care about financial needs</p> <p>need to be secure financially and be able to share other values</p> <p>have green oil energy; we are aware of fire safety solutions.</p>	33
Response to Context	Contextual and flexible leadership approaches to tackle competition and contemporary contexts	<p>requires the leader to change themselves</p> <p>need to be firm and flexible at the same time</p> <p>aware of each style and being aware of the styles we need in the given context</p>	30
Σ			287

Appendix M: Example codes for ‘Belongingness & Community’ through open, axial and selective coding

Buddhism for me is a personal practice. I do not recall the need to have a group of people or a community to advance my practice. Belonging to a Buddhist group does not necessarily mean that you can advance your Buddhist practice. However, I do feel that as a Buddhist practitioner, you need to practise by helping others. For that, if you have a group of people with different problems that can help and give advice to, that can be very helpful for advancing you Buddhist practice.

When I first started learning and practising Buddhism, I faced a lot of confusions. I was lucky enough to get to know a group of Buddhist practitioners. Joining that group helped me lot in understanding and applying Buddhism. I always believe that having a community where you feel belonged and can share your problems and ideas is very helpful. For that, I always take initiatives to create belongingness in my organization and so far I think that my employees are experiencing positive belongingness within the organization.

I have heard that most of my employees are satisfied with our leadership approach and have a positive sense of belongingness. Having a family-like working environment has always been the strongest advantage of our company. For me, on the other hand, having a group for my Buddhist practice is unnecessary. I learn from everyday life and most importantly I learn from my employees and in solving organizational problems. For that I appreciate every employee of mine and consider them like family.

I have a sense that my employees have a positive sense of belongingness in my organization. For me personally, having a sense of belongingness always reflect back positively on myself. Also, having a community that I can belong to, to share Buddhist experiences has been extremely helpful.

You probably have to ask my employees to see whether they feel sense of belongingness working at our company. However, from what I can tell, I believe that we have provided a very supportive environment for employees and I have not heard any complaints from them so far. Likewise, as a Buddhist practitioner, there are ups and downs in practising because Buddhist practice is very challenging itself, thus having a supportive group is very important. I am blessed to be associated with a group of business leaders who are Buddhist practitioners. We share ideas and help each other out in the application of Buddhist practice. It has been extremely helpful for me.

Diverse preferences for Buddhist community

Positive employee sense of belongingness

BELONGINGNESS & COMMUNITY

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